Motor Racing German Grand Prix

Berger back on right track

Alan Henry at Hockenheim

GERHARD BERGER dismissed any doubts about his competitiveness last Sunday with a brilliant comeback victory here after a three-race lay-off with sinus problems.

Berger, who at 37 is the oldest driver racing in Formula One, dominated the German Grand Prix to give Benetton their first success since Michael Schumacher won the 1995 Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka. The Austrian's last victory also came at this circuit, for Ferrari, three years ago.

Berger's win was a timely response to his team, who privately advised him three weeks ago they would not be requiring his services next season. They did, however, have the good grace to allow him to announce his "decision" to leave Benetton late last week.

The victory also came less than three weeks after the death of Berger's father Johann — the driving force behind his career and his No 1 fan — in a light aircraft accident in the Tirol. "I think I got a special power from somewhere this weekend," said Berger after the race, "and I think I know where it came from."

The Benetton-Renault driver finished 17.5sec ahead of Michael Schumacher, but the German driver extended his world championship lead to 10 points over Jacques Villeneuve — the winner at Silverstone last month — who spun out from fourth place with 12 of the race's 45 laps left.

Villeneuve's failure to finish rounded off the worst day in recent memory for the Williams team. Heinz-Harald Frentzen retired at the end of the opening lap with damaged suspension after a first-corner collision with Eddie Irvine's Ferrari. Villeneuve had started the race from a lowly ninth on the grid, with his German team-mate only four places better.

"I have experienced big emotions throughout the weekend," said Berger. "This has been special for me, very special. The pole position, the fastest lap, the victory — it couldn't get any better. I am happy for myself today but also for the team."

Berger said he had been lucky to finish after Jan Magnussen's Stewart-Ford blew its engine in front of him. "I thought I had lost the race then," he said. "I almost had to stop because I could not see."


Berger . . . recorded the 10th victory of his career

Berger, a veteran of 203 grand prix starts over almost 14 seasons, had been in a class of his own throughout qualifying, taking pole position with aplomb on the eve of the race. He then never looked back as he sped to the 10th victory of his career.

Michael Schumacher did well to finish his home grand prix in second place — driving beyond the capabilities of his Ferrari to scrape home ahead of Mika Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes after being forced to make an unscheduled late refuelling stop.

Behind Hakkinen the young Italian Jarno Trulli drove well to take fourth place for the Prost team, with Ralf Schumacher's Jordan and the other Benetton-Renault of Jean Alesi rounding up the top six.

Damon Hill finished in eighth place behind Shinji Nakano's Prost but there were generally slim pickings for the British drivers. Johnny Herbert's Sauber was rammed into retirement by Hill's Arrows team-mate Pedro Diniz, and David Coulthard fell foul of the Frentzen-Irvine collision and was also forced to trail into the pits at the end of the opening lap with a damaged nose cone.

This was replaced but, as the Scot accelerated back into the race, something in the McLaren's transmission broke and he ended the afternoon stranded by the side of the circuit.

Cryptic crossword by Gordius

Across

1 Dartmoor — not the last place to go with dirty boots (7)
5 Palestine extremists and Druse elements vetted (7)
9 Post Office service is faultless, a model for life (5)
10 Engagement involving royal yacht? (9)
11 Conservatism restricts a priest from helping us to see the light (10)
12 Old craft is slow moving without leader (4)
14 Listed building? (5,2,4)
18 One fact: Delors could have been a communist (5,6)
21 Confess, and prison is cut by half (4)
22 Teaching held by religious group: get a grip on unmentionable sin (6,4)
25 Repressive policy made hit parade (9)
26 Turn out to take part in the victory parade (5)
27 Those mad old readers within sight (3-4)
28 Having died, show first sign of getting better — clear? No (7)

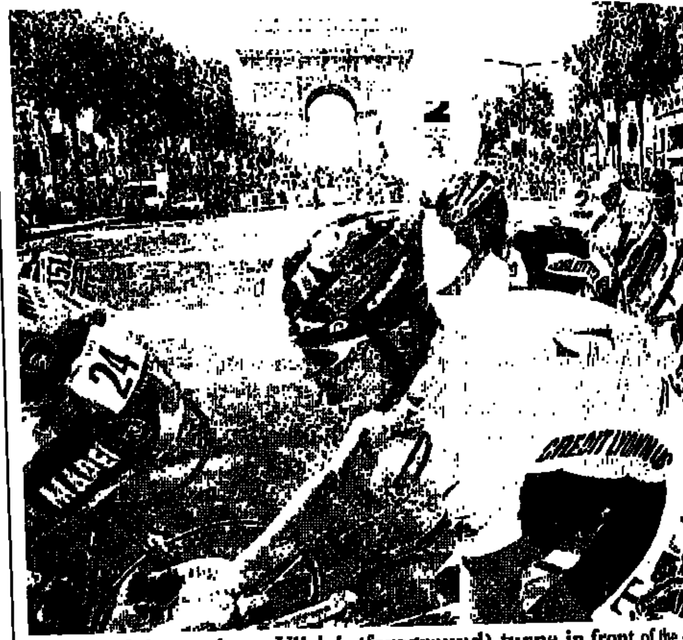
Down

1 Leave record in the river (6)
2 You're in danger of loss if you become inflexible (6)
3 Fashion article: "Men in Commerce" (10)
4 One caught red-handed by head teacher, but nothing's said (5)
5 Fool retains unusual clout, being rich (9)
6 Documents reportedly served by hotel (4)
7 Taking up baths keeps leading man in shape (8)
8 Certificate given to model negotiator (8)
13 Forest self-propagated without difficulty (10)
15 Wheatmeal pasta for the carnivore? (5,4)
16 Place for the outcast? (3-5)
17 Toothless old premier before rise of European state (8)
19 Place on the motorway provides suitable environment (6)
20 Take up residence in Yorkshire (6)
23 Where cowboys demonstrated on foot? (5)
24 State of being without a house (4)

Last week's solution

```
REPRESENT#PASTE
A#A#V#N#W#U#T#L
PARKA#SHIPSHAPE
I#A#P#N#N#S#K#C
DISLOCATED#LEFT
##I#R#R#R#T###R
RATRACE#SWANAGE
E#E#T#####T#B#S
SUSPECT#NOTIONS
E###D#H#O#L#M##
REST#MEANDERING
V#E#R#R#S#T#N#R
IMPRUDENT#AGAPE
N#I#D#S#O#L#T#E
GRATE#APPREHEND
```

Cycling Tour de France


Leader of the pack. . . Ullrich (foreground) turns in front of the Arc de Triomphe at the end of the 22-day Tour PHOTO:

Ullrich's display is a triumph for youth

William Fotheringham in Paris

WHEN Jan Ullrich in the yellow jersey and his team-mate, the points leader Erik Zabel, crossed themselves as the field rolled out of the start in Disneyland's Main Street last Sunday, their gestures seemed incongruous given that their surroundings are devoted to two other gods: Walt and Mammon.

After the dangerous goings on in sprints this year, Zabel's need to ask deliverance could be understood. In four hours he was due to launch himself into the hotly contested finish on the Champs-Elysées, where the Italian Nicola Minali squeezed through a tiny gap between the German and the barriers to take his second stage win of the race. Such dangers are part of modern cycling: the appearance of a streaker as the last riders rode up the Champs was, however, a first.

Ullrich had no need to request divine assistance: the only event of the stage which was in any way threatening came when two French riders grabbed a banner from supporters of the national hero and runner-up Richard Virenque, and brandished it at the front of the bunch. The carnival mood began the evening before when the riders met their families in Disneyland Paris, and continued into the first 65km, covered at a pottering pace of less than 29kmh.

Ullrich crossed himself before the start of each time-trial stage and did it again as he passed the line in last Saturday's time trial. The gestures were a reminder that for all his raw talent and strength he has yet to show the confidence that will surely come with greater maturity and must have increased after his, and Germany's, first Tour victory. Further confirmation of this came when he briefly allowed Virenque to escape on the Champs-Elysées.

At 23 years, seven months, Ullrich is the youngest Tour winner since Laurent Fignon took his first victory in 1983: his winning margin of 9min 9sec over Virenque is the largest since Fignon opened up a gap of more than 10 minutes on fellow Frenchman Bernard Hin[illegible] in 1984.

After seven successive wi[illegible] riders over 27, the age at which [illegible] lore of the *peloton* has it that a [illegible]clist reaches maturity, it is some[illegible] strange to see a rider so young [illegible] cycling's greatest endurance [illegible]

Team-mates speak of his need [illegible] reassurance and advice compa[illegible] to the terse confidence showed [illegible] last year's winner, Bjarne Riis [illegible] is nearly 10 years his senior. [illegible] they also laud the single-m[illegible] modesty bred into him at [illegible] Dynamo Berlin cycling club. "[illegible] never see him reading about [illegible]self in the papers, all he th[illegible] about is his bike," said one.

The impression of a youth fi[illegible] his feet in a new world was stre[illegible]ened when Ullrich, who is [illegible] known for being demonstrative [illegible] those outside his immediate c[illegible] of close friends, seemed genu[illegible] surprised and delighted one[illegible] success was assured with se[illegible] place to the Spaniard Abr[illegible] Olano last Saturday.

Olano's victory, and his [illegible] fourth place overall, will reas[illegible] those in Spain who see him a[illegible] man to carry the Indurain [illegible] The master of the *contre la m*[illegible] himself would have been impr[illegible] with the power and speed sh[illegible] by the 27-year-old Basque. [illegible] there was a hint of times past [illegible] sight of a big man in the strip of [illegible] Banesto bank and wearing a [illegible] Vader helmet, gobbling up the [illegible] mac through cornfields and [illegible]lages.

While Olano salvaged som[illegible] from his Tour at the last [illegible] the nightmare of Riis contin[illegible] the bitter end. Mechanical [illegible]lems caused him to lose 10 [illegible] to Olano last Saturday, and [illegible] run-in to the Champs-Elysées [illegible] not trouble-free thanks to a [illegible] with his cycle computer foll[illegible] a puncture. For him, as [illegible] young team-mate Ullrich, the [illegible] line could not come quickly [illegible]

William Fotheringham is a[illegible] editor of Cycling Weekly

The Guardian Weekly

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Only one road leads to peace

COMMENT
Ian Black

HAMMER blows to the faltering Middle East peace process are sadly nothing new, but last week's carnage in Jerusalem's picturesque Mahane Yehuda market was designed to extinguish the recent faint glimmer of hope that it can be revived.

As governments across the world condemned the violence, and rabbis combed the fruit and vegetable stalls for the bits of human flesh left behind when suicide bombers do their grisly work, prospects for a lasting Israeli-Palestinian settlement have rarely looked so bleak.

The Oslo accords, conceived in secret by the late Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat in 1993, left the hardest problems until the end. Its trick was to build confidence in interim agreements and partial withdrawals to allow Palestinians and Israelis, like a couple trapped in a bad marriage, gradually to separate and then forge a new, healthier relationship. No one thought it would be easy.

To many, Oslo seemed like a good idea: after the intifada transformed the 20-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip into an unbearable burden, most Israelis craved normality more than biblical landscapes, and in 1992 they finally voted for change.

For Palestinians, who had given up an armed struggle that had got them nowhere, the deal offered the symbols and some of the reality of independence, at first in "soft" areas like education and health, but later in territory and guns, the hard currency of power in the area.

It was all a huge gamble for Arafat, but he had little to lose: still exiled in distant Tunis, the PLO chairman faced homegrown leaders who thought their liberation movement had failed them. And ominously, some Palestinians started to look to a fundamentalist creed.

Oslo was a fragile arrangement: the toughest nuts, settlements, borders and Jerusalem, were "final status issues" to be cracked at the end of the process — hostages to many smaller difficulties.

Crucially, the economics were skewed against the Palestinians, leaving them as a captive labour force, in thrall to Israeli markets and security, under undemocratic leaders who were all too ready to cream off international aid to feather their nests, Beirut-style *(see story page 3)*.

It all went surprisingly well after the deal was sealed in that unbelievable handshake on the White House lawn. Israel quickly delivered some goods by pulling out of West Bank towns — though leaving Hebron, with its hard core of Jewish extremists, took longer, and ended in a messy and dangerous compromise. Hebron dealt several blows to Oslo, the first delivered by a Jew — Baruch Goldstein, an American settler who gunned down 29 innocent Palestinians at prayer in the mosque.

Then, as now, the question was: could the Oslo process survive such a setback? Amazingly, it did, although Rabin missed a trick by not seizing the moment to evacuate Hebron's extremist Jews.

Oslo was to outlast much, much more, starting with Hamas attacks on buses in the spring of 1994, then the traumatic Dizengoff Street blast the following autumn, to the suicide bombs more than a year later that tipped the balance against the Labour party's Shimon Peres and brought Binyamin Netanyahu's Likud back to power. Hamas bombers understand this point chillingly well: Israel's security is its — and Arafat's — most vulnerable spot. Breach that and their brittle partnership falls.

On cue, the Israelis were quick last week to accuse the Palestinian leader of failing to make security co-operation work, just as they did, unconvincingly, in March when Arafat was said to have given the "green light" to blow up a Tel Aviv café.


Shoppers pause by the collected belongings of the victims of last week's market bomb attack in Jerusalem, in which 15 people died. The FBI is investigating links between the two suicide bombers and a thwarted plot to blow up the New York subway PHOTO: HAVAKUK LEVISON

But the charge still fails to convince because the Palestinian leader has nothing to gain: strikingly, the latest blasts came after the first sign in months that the impasse could end with Netanyahu resisting demands to approve a Jewish housing project in Arab East Jerusalem.

No magic solution is on offer. But nor, it seems, is there a workable alternative to Oslo's incremental approach, unless it is a settlement imposed, improbably, from outside. What is needed is a stronger commitment by those who can help — Europeans as well as Americans — to keep the process on course: indifference masquerading as non-interference will only help the bombers.

But what is so tragic, amidst the gore and grieving, is that the shape of the final settlement is clear. Both sides know that, sooner or later, the sovereign states of Israel and Palestine will co-exist, in borders that — give or take the odd hill — will be little different from those that separated the two sides before 1967.

Until that truth is grasped, in Gaza, Tel Aviv and Washington, the Holy Land will see not a peace of the brave, but only the peace of the grave.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15

Secrets row over Hong Kong deals

Richard Norton-Taylor and Rebecca Smithers

THE simmering row between Chris Patten and the Foreign Office establishment that marked the end of British rule in Hong Kong exploded into the open this week when the Government confirmed that the former governor is to be investigated over allegations that he leaked information about Britain's covert dealings with China on the future of the colony.

The accusations arise from claims made in The Last Governor, a biography of Mr Patten written by his broadcaster friend Jonathan Dimbleby. The book has provoked a furious reaction from FO mandarins.

Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, said: "It would be irresponsible for the Government not to take the action when there appears to have been a leak of intelligence material."

On Monday Mr Patten broke his silence on holiday in France to deny strongly that he had leaked confidential information about Britain's covert dealings with China.

Mr Dimbleby refused to reveal his sources, but urged an inquiry into his claim that Britain secretly colluded with Beijing and tried to stifle even the limited democracy agreed for Hong Kong in the run-up to the colony's recent handover to China.

A Foreign Office spokesman refused to comment on reports that Mr Patten had asked to see a large number of classified documents while he was governor.

The inquiry was prompted by extracts of Mr Dimbleby's book, published in the Sunday Times last month, which revealed Mr Patten's fury about not being told of a "gents' understanding" between Britain and China to renege on promises that Britain had given to Hong Kong about direct elections in 1988.

Mr Patten made it clear he was angry about Britain's manipulation of a test of public opinion in 1987 — when he was a junior minister — to suggest, wrongly, that Hong Kong did not really want democracy.

The allegation, leaked by Whitehall, that Mr Patten may have been involved in a security breach has clear implications for his ambitions for a political comeback. His name did not appear in last week's honours lists, leaving the way open to his return to politics as an MP.

The Sunday Times extract, under the heading, "A sense of betrayal", refers to the Tory government's 1984 white paper which pointed to the possibility of a "very small number" of directly elected seats on the colony's legislative council in 1988, building up to a "significant number" by 1997.

But in 1985, the British government, advised by Sir Percy Cradock, a former ambassador to China, assured Beijing that the proposal for direct elections was not a firm commitment. Mr Dimbleby described a secret deal "nurtured by nods and winks" leading to a crucial, three-year delay in the introduction of direct elections.

Mr Patten's criticism of British policy, and claims he was not told of the secret deals, have infuriated FO mandarins. Sir Percy Cradock has described Mr Dimbleby as Mr Patten's "hatchet man", while Lord Howe, a former foreign secretary, savaged what he called the "surreal and unjust accusations of treachery and foul play".

Andrew Higgins comments: Shortly before his departure from Hong Kong, Mr Patten sat in a bare office in Government House and pretended that the venomous quarrels of the previous five years had vanished with his furniture. "I think an unhealthy obsession with 'one's place in history' should be avoided like the plague," he said.

But since his departure his critics have been pummelled by heavy ordnance in the form of a five-part BBC documentary and a 450-page tome calculated not merely to maim but to obliterate. Mr Patten did not pilot the raids himself. He entrusted the mission to Mr Dimbleby.

In settling scores, though, Mr Patten has left himself badly exposed. The Achilles' heel of his record in Hong Kong has always been the accusation that he forever had at least one eye fixed firmly on his own future.

While in Government House, Mr Patten liked to quote an adage coined by Stanley Baldwin: "When you've left the bridge, you shouldn't spit on the deck." Having now left the bridge, Mr Patten seems keen to blow up the whole ship.

Austria	A$30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Labour's 'business as usual' on arms sales

THE decision by the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, to "honour" a commitment given by the previous Tory government to sell a further 16 Hawk fighters to Indonesia (Indonesia arms sales to go ahead, August 3) is disgraceful.

What clearer signal could Mr Cook send to the Suharto regime that it is "business as usual"? At a time when the Indonesian armed forces are engaged in a new operation to wipe out popular opposition to their illegal occupation of East Timor, this decision sends the wrong signals at the wrong time.

Many of us in the UK agreed with the principle of successive British governments that violence should not be used to bring about political change in Ireland. Where does that leave us now with Mr Cook intent on supplying an odious regime with the means of continuing its illegal occupation of East Timor and suppressing the pro-democracy movement in Indonesia?
Tom Hyland,
East Timor Ireland Solidarity Campaign, Dublin, Ireland

ROBIN COOK recently issued a mission statement which said: "Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves."

Those heartened by these policy changes may be disturbed to know that the Royal Navy and British Army Equipment Exhibition, scheduled to take place in Farnborough, in Britain, from August 31 to September 5, is going ahead as planned. This is a government-run exhibition and the UK's biggest arms fair. The guest list includes Indonesia and Saudi Arabia, both well-documented abusers of human rights. How can such a guest list be justified in the light of Labour's commitment, and why has the event not been cancelled?
Liz Morton,
Ashbourne, Derbyshire

THE news of the go-ahead for the sale of Hawk jets to Indonesia gives the impression of "business as usual" for the British armaments industry.

If we cannot rely on New Labour to create an ethical state, we have to take the power for change into our own hands by consuming, banking and investing ethically, and joining campaigning organisations that have a firmer view of what is decent.
Richard Scrase,
Bath, Avon

Lashings of tongues

AS SOMEONE who has been bilingual since infancy, I was thrilled to read David Dalby's comments on his study of languages throughout the world (Global study finds world speaking in 10,000 tongues, July 27). What he had to say confirms my own experiences and those of many people like me who have been brought up with more than one language.

In a country such as Australia, where most of the decision-makers and educational experts are resolutely monolingual and consider a "nesbie" or "non-English speaking background" to be a handicap of crippling proportions, I hope that the study, when released, will be widely available. In fact, being bilingual does indeed, as Dr Dalby says, "sharpen the wits". It is a gift and a blessing, not a curse — for a language embodies the soul of a people, and its own particular way of looking at the world. As a writer, my intimate knowledge of French enriches my English, and vice versa.

And it makes me think more deeply about the images embodied in words. For instance, "ruisseau" and "stream", while meaning the same thing, convey different aspects of that thing: the English word, to me, suggests the movement of water; while the French equivalent conveys the sound.

Being bilingual teaches you to think laterally, to think about meaning and sound, and makes you realise from the beginning that there's no such thing as "average" or "normal" — that your language isn't the true, pre-Babel way of speaking. The spectacular success of English as a second language should certainly not blind Anglophones to the fact that the world doesn't necessarily think or feel in English.

By the way, it is rather amusing to note the conjunction of languages within the fact that Dr Dalby is the director of the Observatoire Linguistique based at Hebron in Dyfed.
Sophie Masson,
Invergowrie, NSW, Australia

Being American is hard work

I READ with amusement Cecil Bloch's letter (July 27) responding to Kamal Ahmed's article on work weeks in Britain and Europe. Mr Bloch derides America's "workaholism" and compares it to "slavery of whips and chains". Unfortunately, his observations are not only myopic, but miss the mark entirely.

The United States initially was established by those fleeing England, in part, to escape religious persecution. The Pilgrims brought with them a religion-based respect for hard work, which, because of the obstacles they successfully overcame in the New World, evolved into the acclaimed American or Protestant work ethic. Rather than a curse, the traditional American work ethic is a blessing that infuses our culture. More significantly, this unrelenting productivity has enabled Americans to assist other nations and peoples frequently and selflessly in times of war, famine and other crises, particularly during this century. Indeed, the world should be thankful to the beneficence that only a productive America can bestow.

Contrary to what others might think, America is a far cry from Upton Sinclair's fictional tale, The Jungle. While we do collectively work very, very hard, we do so to escape high taxes, pursue that famed American dream and invigorate our souls. Besides, we get two days off each week and several federal, state and local holidays throughout the year, many of which fall on Fridays and Mondays, giving us three-day weekends. This hardly constitutes an oppressive work culture.

As an attorney, I get four weeks of vacation annually which I rarely use. Instead of complaining, I spend my limited time away from the office having fun and relaxing. Mr Bloch contends that we have but three choices to escape the hellish "workaholism" that is America — that is, to "submit, flip hamburgers, or starve". Well, Mr Bloch, here's another option: emigrate to Amsterdam, where a great number of citizens don't work and instead exist mindlessly off the public largess.
Paul E Escobar,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Fight for your right to die

EUTHANASIA: British hypocrisy rules! The BMA wants to continue with the fudge whereby the doctors pretend to be doing one thing while they actually do another (Doctors reject health charge, July 6). The public doesn't seem to want to open a debate about it, or even think about death at all.

Why should our death be the last remaining important part of our lives over which we have no choice? I want to choose the manner — and if at all possible, the moment — of my death. Of course I may be killed in an accident; but I don't want to be forced to stay "alive" and suffer, or be mentally incompetent, or unable to control my bodily functions, existing only by favour of the latest technology.

My mother fought for the right to vote; eventually the suffragettes won. I fight for the right to die as I choose. If possible I would not ask for any third party to help; but if I am unable to acquire the means for quiet and painless departure from this world, I hope no doctor would face prosecution for helping me.

I have for years carried with me a document setting out my wishes and asking that they be respected in the event of an accident. My intention is clear and long-standing. Why should it be an offence for a doctor to comply with it? Voluntary euthanasia is a human right. I stress "voluntary".
Soleil Smith,
Couzou, France

Ups and downs of pensions

AT PRESENT there are glaring discrepancies in the pensions paid to expatriates in different parts of the world (The Week in Britain, July 27). Those living in some Commonwealth countries (such as Canada and Australia) do not have their UK pension payments indexed. By contrast, expatriates living in other countries (such as the United States and Switzerland) have always had their pensions paid out at current (fully-indexed) UK levels. This state of affairs seems to me both arbitrary and inequitable.

The argument of reciprocal arrangements was once put forward by the Thatcher government in justification for such lopsided treatment. It certainly no longer holds (if it ever did) in the Canadian case: Canadian old-age pensions paid to Canadian residents in the UK are indexed.

A future policy of non-indexing, if applied uniformly throughout the world, would at best be consistent. Full indexing for all concerned may be too much to hope for, but let us at least have a scheme that is equitable.
G Field,
Dundas, Ontario, Canada

Briefly

CHRISTOPHER Zinn (August 3) reports the row in Pacific countries over a leaked "Australian eyes only" document. Perhaps the adverse reaction from South Pacific leaders indicates that the Australian officials got it right. Most people here think so. What's wrong with telling the truth? Three cheers for the leaked documents brigade.
Edmund Cutler,
Christchurch, New Zealand

CLAIRE Wallerstein in Manila (Asia "faces acute rice shortage", July 20) is more than two years out of date. The director-general of the International Rice Research Institute at Los Banos is George Rothschild. Klaus Lampe was director-general until April 1995.
Jenny Rothschild,
Canberra, Australia

MAY I point out that the Hanford Nuclear Reservation (US failed radioactive alert, August 3) is in Washington state, not in California. I assume it was a sub-editor without access to a map who moved California from its sunny southwest location to the Evergreen state that borders Canada.

As a resident of British Columbia who has lived too long with Hanford on my doorstep, I should, of course, have been delighted if the relocation of the nuclear dump had been true.
Janet Ingram-Johnson,
Vancouver, BC, Canada

CONSIDERING Henry VIII was the original Defender of the Faith, I have difficulty understanding the Vicar of Tetbury's concern about Prince Charles' adultery (July 27). He should reflect on old Henry's behaviour.
Richard Manning,
Ubud, Bali, Indonesia

THANKS for the interesting article on modern piracy (Water rats bring menace to the waves, July 13). I beg to differ concerning the statement "The phenomenon is so new . . . etc". Piracy has never abated, although we are probably startled to realise the fact.
Sandra Cuza,
São Paulo, Brazil

I FIND your use of the word carpetbaggers to describe building society investors looking for a quick profit most intriguing (Carpetbaggers stampede, July 27). What is the difference between a carpetbagger and a canny investor? Is there a suggestion here that only people who agree with the principles on which building societies were founded should morally be allowed to invest with them?
Peter Mapleston,
Colazza, Italy

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West freezes out bickering Bosnia

Karen Coleman in Sarajevo

BRITAIN and other leading Western powers suspended contact with Bosnian diplomats on Monday after leaders of the Balkan state failed to meet the August 1 deadline set for the appointment of its ambassadors.

Austria, France, Italy, Sweden and the United States joined an initiative launched by Germany in protest at the Bosnians' failure to live up to the 1995 Dayton peace accords, which requires them to share diplomatic posts among the country's three ethnic groups.

When elections were held in Bosnia last September it was accepted that the three-member presidency would appoint or confirm all ambassadorial positions abroad and that the posts would be divided among Croats, Serbs and Muslims.

Almost a year later, the three sides still cannot agree who should get what positions. Most of the 31 current posts are held by Muslims. The Serbs and the Croats want to put their people in the world's capitals, too. Each of Bosnia's factions wants the plum post at the head of the Washington embassy, and sources said agreement seemed far away.

Bosnia's deputy foreign minister, Husein Zivalj, a Muslim, said on Monday: "We'll see in the following days if final agreement can be reached. We hope it will and that we'll overcome this deadlock. But the policy paper, the way each ambassador would represent the country, is an even more crucial issue than their appointment itself."

The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, who visited Bosnia last week, said on Monday: "Regrettably, they have failed to agree on the appointment of ambassadors by the August 1 deadline. As a result I am today suspending contact with the Bosnian chargé d'affaires in London."

The British decision coincided with strong condemnation of the Bosnian Croats for last weekend's events in which about 500 Muslims were forced to leave villages to which they had just returned.

"Recleansing" was the word used to describe the latest tactics by the Croats to keep their towns and villages ethnically pure. An official of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees used the term when he expressed outrage at the behaviour of Bosnian Croats.

"It is quite appalling that these people were recleansed from their homes one year and nine months after Dayton [peace agreement], having been able to gather enough courage to go back to their partially destroyed homes last week," Kris Janowski said in Sarajevo.

He added that there could be no lasting peace and no stability in Bosnia unless minorities were allowed to return to their homes. If they could not, the peace process was in danger of collapsing.

The international community in Bosnia is threatening to punish those who encouraged the stand-offs. A statement issued by the main international organisations in Bosnia demands that the Croat authorities re-establish law and order. It gave them 48 hours from last Sunday to enable the families to return.

"Perpetrators must be punished. We will press for the removal from office of those politically responsible," the organisations said.

Arafat told to sack cabinet

Julian Borger in Jerusalem

YASSER ARAFAT'S cabinet is so riddled with corruption that it should be dissolved and some of its members put on trial, a Palestinian parliamentary committee of inquiry reported last week.

The report is the latest in a series to lambaste the Palestinian leadership for flaunting luxury cars and villas, nepotism and bribe-taking before the impoverished West Bank and Gaza.

Up to $320 million, half the Palestinian Authority's budget, is estimated to have been misspent or embezzled.

Sa'di al-Krunz, one of the report's authors, said half the cabinet was implicated in the misappropriation of funds. "There are others who do nothing wrong, but on the other hand they do nothing good. They are old or they do not know about the ministries they are in charge of," he added.

In the wake of the report, 16 of the cabinet's 18 ministers offered their resignation, the agriculture minister, Abdel Jawwad Saleh, said.

They signed a paper leaving their fate to the Palestinian Authority president, Mr Arafat. It was given to him at the weekly cabinet meeting. Mr Arafat's office confirmed that he had received the resignations and said he would consider their offer at a "suitable time".

Mr Saleh said the planning minister, Nabil Sha'ath, and the information minister, Yasser Abed Rabbo, did not resign.

The allegations come when the confidence of major aid donors is wearing thin and Mr Arafat desperately needs Western support in his negotiations with the Israelis.

The report was read to an open session of the Palestinian legislative council (PLC) by members of the investigative committee. It called on Mr Arafat to "dissolve the cabinet and form a new cabinet made up of technocrats and qualified people" and take the violators to court.

The committee singled out the civil affairs minister, Jamil al-Tarifi, and the transport minister, Ali Kawasmeh, and Mr Sha'ath as the worst offenders. Mr Sha'ath is the Palestinians' leading negotiator in talks with the Israeli government.

Mr al-Krunz said his committee found several cases in which aid money had been used by ministers or senior officials to buy themselves cars or extend and decorate their houses. "When they knew we have discovered these things, they have tried to give the money back."

Another report last month, commissioned by Mr Arafat himself, came to similar conclusions and called on him to "put his house in order". In May a 600-page audit of the authority found that more than $320 million had been "mismanaged or squandered" last year.



A rescue worker suspended from a helicopter searches for survivors in cars in the ruins of two lodges hit by a landslide last week in the ski resort of Thredbo, in Australia's Snowy Mountains. Up to 20 people are believed to have been trapped in the wreckage. More than 60 hours after the disaster struck, police rescued Stuart Diver, a ski instructor, from the rubble. More than 600 rescuers were still working round the clock this week, but the chances of finding more survivors were becoming increasingly slim.
PHOTO: TORSTEN BLACKWOOD

Kenya police round up refugee 'spies'

Lucy Hannan in Nairobi

KENYAN police are rounding up hundreds of refugees and foreigners after President Daniel arap Moi announced that "foreign spies and criminals" were masquerading as refugees and inciting the people.

Last week, buses carrying 129 Burundian, Rwandan, Sudanese and Somali refugees drove under police escort to Kakuma camp, more than 800km from Nairobi. Most had spent almost two weeks in police cells despite having protection letters from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

One Burundian refugee who stood by the bus to say goodbye to his arrested wife and children said he was sleeping with about 20 other refugees in a church for protection. "The Kenyan government has a problem in its own country and wants to turn the focus on us," he said.

A police spokesman, Peter Kimanthi, said that about 600 people had been arrested over the last few weeks and were being held at Nairobi, Mombasa and Eldoret police stations. But the number is believed to be much higher. People are being screened by the police and immigration department. Some claim to have valid documentation, others admit to expired visas.

"These people are a burden to us and we would like to get rid of them as soon as possible," said Mr Kimanthi. Each case would be investigated before a decision was made on what to do, he added.

Peter Kessler, a UNHCR spokesman, said the agency could help about one-third of those in custody.

Only those who agreed to go to the camps — where conditions are harsh — are being recognised as "legitimate" refugees by the government and UNHCR. While the agency says it must abide by a government mandate, critics accuse it of complacency.

Public pronouncements by President Moi act like directives to the loyal police and immigration department, who have clouded the operation in secrecy. But a Kenyan lawyer, Kathurima M'Inoti, described the operation as "totally illegal". Under the law, illegal aliens should be charged and taken to court within 24 hours.

The Kenyan operation began with a crackdown on Rwandans suspected of involvement in the 1994 genocide. On July 18, seven suspects were arrested and handed over to the UN international criminal tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania.

● Kenya faces an economic crisis following the International Monetary Fund's decision to suspend a $210 million loan last week. Despite nervous speculation that the Kenyan shilling might rapidly lose value, there was no immediate impact on the exchange rate.

The IMF said the three-year loan would lapse because President Moi's government had failed to meet concern about corruption and reform the energy sector. The finance minister, Musalia Mudavadi, warned: "The shortfall could destabilise the economy."

Opposition leaders, who have been pressing for aid to be suspended, have welcomed the IMF decision and see it as an international humiliation of President Moi.

The Week

NIGERIA, Bolivia and Colombia are regarded by business people and political analysts as the most corrupt of the 52 countries listed in a survey published by the Berlin-based corruption watchdog, Transparency International.

AUSTRALIA'S highest court ruled that a group of Aborigines taken from their parents by past governments under an assimilation law on mixed-race children may not sue for compensation.

POLICE using batons, dogs and water cannon broke up a protest by thousands of Islamists in the Turkish capital, Ankara, to challenge the prime minister Mesut Yilmaz's effort to curtail religious education.

SOUTH AFRICA expelled the Portuguese ambassador for leaking a letter sent by President Nelson Mandela to Indonesia's President Suharto.

A VOLCANIC eruption on the Caribbean island of Montserrat sent superheated gas, rock and ash tearing through the deserted capital Plymouth, setting alight buildings abandoned two years ago.

CHARLES Taylor, Liberia's former warlord, was sworn in as president, two weeks after winning 75 per cent of the vote in the West African country's first election following seven years of war.

THE Taliban and Afghanistan's opposition alliance exchanged artillery and rocket fire and bombed each other's positions near Kabul in some of the fiercest clashes of their recent battle for the capital, Kabul.

FOUR climbers died on Mont Blanc, and the bodies of a British and a Dutch mountaineer missing since July 10 were found.

THE Church of Scientology celebrated a legal victory after a court in Lyon, France, recognised it as a religion.
Le Monde, page 13

SPANISH police arrested 10 people in connection with an alleged child prostitution ring in Barcelona. About 50 children children are thought to have suffered sexual abuse and torture.

FOUR British soldiers appeared in court in Cyprus accused of beating up English holidaymakers, sparking renewed calls for the British army to leave the island.

JEAN CALMENT, officially the world's oldest person, died in Arles, in southern France, five months after celebrating her 122nd birthday.

Jews seek to sue big Swiss banks

Joanna Coles in New York

LAWYERS claiming to represent 18,000 Holocaust survivors appeared in a Brooklyn court last week to try to persuade a judge to allow them to launch a $20 billion civil lawsuit against Switzerland's three largest banks.

The application is the latest attempt to make the Swiss compensate concentration camp victims and their relatives. If the case proceeds it could wreak havoc on Switzerland's banking system, potentially bankrupting the Union Bank of Switzerland, the Swiss Bank Corp and the Crédit Suisse group.

"Justice, justice is all I want," said Greta Beer, a New York woman in her 70s, as she walked into the courtroom. Ms Beer said she has tried since the 1960s to obtain money her father deposited in a Swiss bank in the 1930s.

The banks, the Swiss government and an independent commission set up to investigate dormant bank accounts belonging to Jewish victims of the Nazi regime, have asked for the case to be thrown out.

But the lawyer leading the case, Edward Fagan, said: "I don't think there's a snowball's chance in hell of this case being dismissed." Mr Fagan said it was imperative the case proceed quickly, because many of his clients were elderly.

"There has to be a means to hold the banks responsible," Michael Hausfeld, another lawyer, said during the hearing.

Judge Edward Korman is expected to take weeks to reach a decision, and any ensuing lawsuit could take years.



Italy displays valuables in Rome seized from Jews by Nazis in the Trieste area during the second world war, and held in Italian government vaults, before handing them over to Jewish leaders PHOTO: PLINIO LEPRI

The battle begins for a freer Iran

Kathy Evans in Tehran

BEFORE leaving his house every morning, Cyrus, a retired Tehran businessman, peers from his balcony down the street, his golden retriever standing at his side, her tail wagging. "It's getting dangerous to take the dog out now. People keep throwing stones at her. I'll try again later when the neighbours are not around," he says, patting the dog's head.

In Iran, such a simple pleasure as walking the dog is considered an un-Islamic habit imported from the West. It is only one of the pleasures banned in the Islamic Republic.

The government determines what you wear, what you read in your newspapers, what novels are published, what films are made, what television programmes you can watch, and even who you can entertain in the confines of your own home.

After 18 years of Islamic revolutionary fervour, the majority of Iranians have had enough. They yearn for normality and freedom, for a return to the time when an Iranian passport did not have pariah status overseas, when business and industry flourished and jobs were plentiful.

Mohammed Khatami, the man they believe can deliver such changes, took power last Sunday as the country's president. He carries the hopes of two-thirds of the country's voters, particularly the young and women, for change and reform.

The changes they want strike at the very heart of the revolution and the hardline clerics who sustain the system in the name of Islam.

In the past few weeks of the run-up to Mr Khatami's inauguration, the hard-liners have demonstrated their power by arresting leading liberals in the Khatami camp.

Faraj Sarkuhi, an editor, is facing the death penalty on charges of espionage, and the prominent philosopher Abdul Karim Suroush, who believes religion is a private rather than a state affair, has been banned from leaving the country. Liberal figures in the Tehran municipality have been rounded up and charged with corruption.

Mr Khatami inherits a system rigged against change. Conservatives have the majority in parliament and will oppose his reforms at every step. His biggest problem, though, is the man at the top, to whom all political organisations including parliament and the president are subservient — the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

In the election Ayatollah Khamenei seemed to back Mr Khatami's conservative rival, Nateq Nouri, the parliamentary Speaker. Mr Khatami has since been reminded in numerous newspaper editorials and speeches that he must pursue policies approved by the supreme leader.

What these warnings ignore is that Ayatollah Khamenei's status is being questioned as never before. Until now the issue could not be broached: those who dared to often ended up in prison.

Clerics have questioned Ayatollah Khamenei's status from the day he took over from his more illustrious predecessor, Ayatollah Khomeini. Many believe he is not qualified for the role of *marja* (spiritual leader) of all Shias. Since the presidential election, the debate has come out of the shadows.

Last month Grand Ayatollah Montazeri argued in a letter to the new president that the supreme leader was not above the law. The point has since been taken up by supporters of Mr Khatami.

But the reality is that the key revolutionary organisations report not to the president but to the supreme leader, and it is they that have the power to arrest you for wearing the wrong clothes or having coffee with members of the opposite sex.

It appears, however, that Mr Khatami has won the first round in the battle by appointing liberals to head the key ministries of foreign affairs, the interior, and Islamic guidance.

But on the eve of the inauguration, the editorials in pro-Khamenei newspapers are already full of criticism of the new faces. The battle, it seems, has only just begun.

● The German foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, said on Monday the European Union would not allow Tehran to dictate the terms of the return of EU ambassadors to Iran.

All EU states except Greece recalled their ambassadors from Tehran after a German court ruled in April that Iran's top leaders had ordered the 1992 assassination of four Iranian Kurdish dissidents in a Berlin restaurant.

Iran, which strongly rejected the court's conclusion, has said the envoys can return to Tehran but has indicated the German ambassador must be the last.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 16

Inflation in Russia over, says Yeltsin

Mark Milner

BORIS YELTSIN declared inflation in Russia officially dead this week and announced that to celebrate its passing three "superfluous" zeros will be slashed from Russia's currency notes.

In an upbeat statement the Russian president said the rouble was now one of the most stable currencies in eastern Europe and that the authorities were in control of both money supply and inflation. "There will be no more inflation. That is all over. New zeros will never again appear on our notes."

Despite the hubristic tone of Mr Yelstin's announcement, the Russian authorities are taking a cautious approach to the redenomination of the rouble, clearly determined to avoid the panics which have been sparked by previous currency reforms.

The new notes will be introduced at the beginning of next year, but old notes will remain in circulation for a year and will be exchangeable until 2002. The long run-in contrasts with the last reform when Russians were given three days' notice of the changeover, and limits were placed on how much money individuals could change into the new currency.

The reform should make shopping easier. Inflation took off in Russia when the government liberalised prices at the beginning of the 1990s. As a result a loaf of bread soared in price from 25 kopeks in the late 1980s to 2,500 roubles today — 10,000 times as much. It will also see the return of the kopek which, as one hundredth of a rouble, soon fell victim to inflation.

"This is basically a positive step," said Robert Eksuzyan, a Muscovite in his 60s. "When things are calculated in billions and even trillions, it reminds me of the days my father spoke of in the 1920s when people had to carry around sackfuls of money."

Not everyone was quite so enthusiastic, however. One Moscow pensioner warned: "I've lived here all my life, and I know that if the government promises one thing, they turn it around 180 degrees. They want to steal from the people, and everyone is tired of being tricked."

Mr Yeltsin promised that would not happen. "Over the last 50 years, everything involving monetary reforms has hit ordinary people. Now that's excluded. No one will lose anything as a result of this reform. No one's interests will be harmed. This reform won't be a confiscation," he said.

Inflation has not quite been squeezed out. The central bank governor, Sergei Dubinin, said on Monday that inflation this year will be around 8 per cent and is expected to fall to 6 per cent next year. That compares with a 1993 peak of 2,600 per cent and rates consistently into three figures since then.

Talks open as Korea food crisis deepens

John Gittings

NORTH Korea begins much-delayed four-power talks in New York this week as the United Nations and international aid agencies warn that the devastation of its crops by floods and drought leaves it facing the threat of famine.

"It is absolutely disastrous. It is going to be a major catastrophe that no one realised because they kept on hoping it would rain tomorrow," an expert at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said in a joint UN agencies statement on Monday.

Torrential rain fell throughout North Korea last Sunday, but came too late to save crops stunted by 50 days of drought. It added to the problems caused by two years of floods, which have reduced rations to bare subsistence levels.

The New York meeting, attended by the two Koreas, the United States and China, will discuss the timing of and agenda for the four-power peace talks which the North has at last agreed to join.

In return for its co-operation, increasing supplies of foreign aid are now reaching the country, but they may be too late to save children stunted by years of malnutrition.

Pyongyang, under its reclusive leader Kim Jong-il, desperately needs help, and as a goodwill gesture on Monday it handed over the remains of four US soldiers killed in the Korean war.

But Pyongyang-watchers have found evidence in the North Korean press of high-level opposition to a policy of detente with "the imperialist enemy".

Last week the official communist party newspaper Nodong Sinmun insisted that the country could "pull through any storm" by its own efforts. It called on the North Korean army and people "to be ready to become human bombs and make a suicidal attack to defend the headquarters of the revolution".

The planned four-power talks are intended to lead to a permanent peace settlement in place of the armistice signed in 1953. Until recently the North said it would only sign a new treaty with the US, claiming that the South was an American puppet.

Pyongyang's propaganda against Seoul has eased as South Korea prepares to send thousands of tons of food to the North, starting next week, under a new deal signed in Beijing.

The FAO in Rome says that 70 per cent of the North Korean maize crop has been devastated. An Oxfam team that visited the country has brought videotaped footage shot in kindergartens showing thin, listless and [illegible]-eyed children, some too weak to sit up without help.

But observers are afraid that the talks, if they do begin, will be long and difficult. They say North Korea will be unwilling to promote a policy of rapprochement which undermines its authoritarian grip, and that unseen internal tensions may cause more complications.

Russia squeezes church dissenters

James Meek in Moscow

THROUGH the rickety wooden gate, into the yard and under the ripening fruit of a walnut tree to the back door of a plain, squat south Russian house. The voices of the Milk Ones can already be heard, old and strong in song, squeezed into Pyotr Petrov's parlour for their weekly service.

The Molokane, the Milk Ones, are Russian, and their sect as old as Russian colonisation on the western marches of the great eastern steppe where the city of Voronezh lies. But their way of worshipping God is so radically different from Russia's dominant Orthodox Christianity that they have been persecuted for most of that time.

Although President Boris Yeltsin vetoed a restrictive new religious bill last month, the Orthodox Church and its allies are lobbying for its approval. With the battle on for a revised bill, history's defiant losers fear persecution again.

"Before the Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity, the Romans persecuted the Christians," said Petrov, at 83 the elder of the Voronezh Molokane. "After Constantine took the faith and Christianity became the official religion, it changed from persecuted to persecutor."

Mr Yeltsin has yet to make Orthodoxy Russia's official religion. But the remnants of the once-atheist Communist party have turned into zealous supporters of special legal advantages for Orthodoxy over smaller Christian sects.

The Pope has written to the Russian leader protesting that the new religion bill discriminates against the country's Catholics. In the United States, powerful Baptist and evangelical lobbies have got Congress to threaten to cut back aid if the law goes into effect.

But few voices are raised in support of Russia's native religious dissidents, like the Milk Ones. The Molokane reject Orthodox rites. They have no churches, but worship in private houses or meeting halls. They have no icons, incense, priests, costumes, crucifixes, or saints. They don't believe in baptism. They sing psalms in modern Russian, not Old Church Slavonic. They don't keep fasts, as Orthodoxy demands, nor do they follow the prescribed five periods of mourning in the first year after death. They refuse to pray for the dead at all.

Russians colonised what became the Molokane heartlands of Voronezh, Tambov and Saratov at the same time as the American war of independence, and the services on a recent Sunday would have gladdened the hearts of the staunch Presbyterians who conceived the US constitution. The worshippers, dressed in everyday clothes, stood around an ordinary table covered in a check cloth and three large Bibles. They alternated the singing of psalms with preaching in turn, drawing lessons from the Bible: one preacher was a woman.

"May God forgive the person who carries a cross and adores an icon," said Petrov. "Because we believe that the worshipping of icons is a sin."

This kind of talk has got the Molokane in trouble down the years. From the moment they appeared, they were subject to ferocious persecution from an Orthodox Church synonymous with the tsarist state. In a country where most people are unwilling or afraid to recall ancestors before the war, Petrov recounts how his great-great-grandfather, a serf, was flogged for refusing to go to church or wear a cross.

Thousands were deported to the Caucasus and Siberia. Thousands more emigrated. After a period of religious freedom between 1905 and 1929, Stalin's Terror and the largely successful attempt to turn Orthodoxy into a branch of the Soviet state drove the Milk Ones underground.

Supporters of the new religion bill argue it will protect Russian society from cults like the Aum Shinrikyo sect and the apocalyptic White Brotherhood movement that spread from Ukraine in the early 1990s. Critics argue that it explicitly singles out four "traditional" religions for preferential treatment — Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism — and makes it almost impossible for other sects to acquire legal status.

Once-atheist Communists are zealous supporters of the Orthodox Church, but not the rights of other Christian worshippers

The Milk Ones' movement was founded in the late 18th century by a Tambov landowner, Semyon Uklein, who, according to some accounts, fell under the influence of a Protestant tutor from England. It was part of the great spiritual quest in Russia launched by minor Orthodox reforms in the 17th century which created a host of schismatic sects, from the conservative Old Believers to the self-castrating *skoptsy*.

The origins of the name are obscure; it is variously thought to refer to the spiritual milk of the Bible, the dissenters' custom of ignoring Orthodox fasts or the Milky River in Ukraine where there was a large Molokane settlement.

"There's no place in the religion bill for those confessions which have come out of the conflicts within the Orthodox Church, which have stood up for freedom of conscience," said Mikhail Zherebyatev, a teacher of religion and philosophy in Voronezh. "There's a monopoly for the Moscow Patriarchy and the other ethnic religions."

Whatever the fate of the religion bill, which appears to contradict the Russian constitution, the Molokane are under threat from another quarter. Despite the efforts of the Tambov Molokane to organise with the help of emigré Milk Ones in California, their adherents are becoming willing converts of the American evangelists now proselytising through the region.

William Thomson, a 62-year-old lay preacher from New Jersey travelling down to Voronezh for a week's preaching holiday, said he shared the Milk Ones' hostility towards the Orthodox Church, but not their suspicion of Mammon. "The number of verses in the Bible about money is incredible," he observed.

Pardon for terrorists splits Italian MPs

Philip Willan in Rome

THE founder of Italy's Red Brigades, Renato Curcio, could be released from prison soon under the terms of a pardon being considered by parliament.

The proposal to reduce sentences imposed under emergency legislation during Italy's "years of lead", approved by parliament's justice committee last week, could open the prison gates for 200 terrorists.

It has sparked an impassioned debate on the political violence that bloodied the streets and rocked the country's institutions between 1969 and 1989. The centre-left coalition government and the centre-right opposition are both divided on whether Italy is now ready to forgive and forget.

The pardon provides for long prison sentences to be halved and life sentences to be reduced to 21 years. Red Brigades members such as Mario Moretti, Anna Laura Braghetti and Prospero Gallinari, convicted of kidnapping and murdering the Christian Democrat Party chairman Aldo Moro in 1978, could benefit if the proposal passes into law.

The bill, drafted by Nichi Vendola, a Communist Refoundation Party MP, excludes those responsible for indiscriminate bomb massacres carried out by the far right. Life sentences passed on Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro, convicted of the 1980 Bologna station bombing, would not be reduced.

Mr Vendola said parliament had a duty to go beyond the pain and anger of the terrorists' victims to realign the scales of justice.

"The terrorists were shooting at symbols, forgetting that those who died were men," he said.

The temperature of the debate has been raised by a link between the bill and Toni Negri, the political science professor who influenced the growth of leftwing political extremism in the early 1970s.

On July 1 Negri returned to Italy from 14 years' exile in Paris to serve a prison sentence for terrorist crimes. He said his voluntary return was intended to reopen the debate on the fate of Italy's "political prisoners".

His prediction several weeks ago that the committee would approve the pardon bill raised the suspicion that he had been given high-level political guarantees before turning himself in.

Though Negri himself will not benefit from the pardon, as his sentence has only another six months or so to run, its opponents have scornfully dubbed it the "Negri bill".

"It's really unacceptable that parliament should celebrate the return to Italy of Toni Negri, the prophet of armed struggle, in this way," said Maurizio Gasparri, a far right National Alliance MP.

Opponents of the bill say clemency is premature while crucial events in the terrorist campaign, which cost more than 350 lives, remain shrouded in mystery. With rare exceptions, those responsible for a series of random bombings aimed at the public have not been identified.

The role of politicians and the secret services in a "strategy of tension" that used both leftwing and rightwing terrorism to keep the Communist Party out of power has yet to be clarified. And the exact circumstances of Moro's kidnapping at a time when he was trying to bring about a compromise between Communists and Christian Democrats remain unclear.

"The real problem is the Moro case," said Aldo Giannuli, a consultant to the parliamentary commission on terrorism.

"If the pardon becomes law, there will be no chance of getting to the bottom of what really happened."

US troops 'were killed by own mines'

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE campaign to ban land-mines, spearheaded by Princess Diana, has been given a boost from an unlikely quarter: the Pentagon. It secretly knew for decades that tens of thousands of American soldiers were killed and maimed by mines made in the United States, it was revealed in a report last week.

A former Marine Corps commandant, General Alfred Gray, is quoted in the report saying: "We kill more Americans with our own mines than we do anyone else."

The government's reluctance to back the Canadian campaign for a worldwide moratorium on the manufacture and use of land-mines has been based on the argument that mines are necessary to protect US servicemen.

But it has been officially — albeit secretly — acknowledged by the Pentagon that American servicemen were among the primary victims of US-made land-mines during the wars in Korea and Vietnam. That information was made public in Washington last week by two groups campaigning for a ban on land-mines: Human Rights Watch and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

Their report shows that surveys and studies kept in the Pentagon show that 90 per cent of the land-mines and explosive booby traps used against American personnel during the Vietnam war were either US-made, or assembled by Vietcong or Cambodian troops from American parts.

The report, entitled In Its Own Words, says: "The Pentagon's argument that anti-personnel mines serve as an important defence weapon that safeguards Americans in combat is undermined by its own archival resources. It was the US, not North Korea or North Vietnam, which introduced mines en masse into Korea and Vietnam."

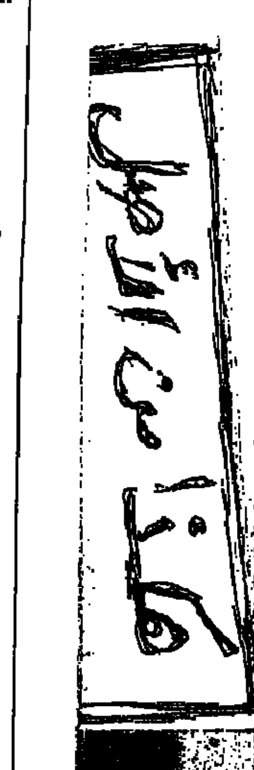
The secret surveys were uncovered by a Democrat senator, Patrick Leahy of Vermont, who is trying to force a bill through Congress banning mines by 2000.

In Vietnam, the report says the first American to be killed was the victim of a US mine. About 64,000 US servicemen were killed or wounded by mines during the Vietnam war.

An internal memo from Vietnam sent in 1969 says: "The enemy uses a very limited number of factory-produced Soviet and Chinese communist mines. The majority are fabricated locally in village or district munition factories from US duds and refuse."

The governments of more than 100 countries are committed to supporting a treaty endorsing the moratorium, which was proposed by the Canadian government and is due to be ratified in Ottawa by the end of this year. US support is seen by the treaty's advocates as crucial to its success.

The Pentagon said last week it had no comment to make on the publication of the figures.



Clinton bucks the trend over budget

WASHINGTON DIARY
Patrick Brogan

THERE IS an air of anticlimax in Washington these days, particularly among Republicans. President Clinton and Congress have reached an agreement on the budget that they assure us will eliminate the federal deficit by 2002, cut taxes and increase spending all at the same time. This is the trick Ronald Reagan promised in 1980 and conspicuously failed to pull off. But instead of loud rejoicing, Congressmen of all persuasions are grumbling that the deal is a fake, and the great American public is ignoring the whole thing.

It is all very strange. Balancing the budget has been one of the shibboleths of American politics since the 1970s. It has been the subject of countless speeches by politicians of all persuasions and the main object of Republican policy. Indeed, the Republican party so despaired of Washington's ability to balance the books that it embraced a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would make balanced budgets obligatory. On the other flank, liberal Democrats asserted that balancing the budget could only be achieved by increasing taxes and cutting government spending to the bone, or beyond — a prospect they found intolerable.

It turns out that the whole thing is so completely painless that, along with the rich, those on lower incomes can get a huge tax cut so long as they have children. We have attained the nirvana of a federal surplus, or we will attain it, quite painlessly — indeed we are being rewarded for the achievement.

The chief benefit for the lower classes is to be a government subsidy of $500 per child under 16, and up to $1,200 a year for college expenses. For the well-to-do, capital gains tax is to be cut from 28 per cent to 20 per cent. Those on middle incomes with no children and no money invested in stocks will get nothing, save the vague hope that good times will percolate down to them when the budget is finally balanced.

This amazing result has been achieved because the United States is in the midst of the longest boom in recent history. The stock market roars ahead (the Dow Jones index now stands well over 8,000); unemployment hovers around 5 per cent; and inflation has been at minimal levels for three years now.

As a result, government revenue has been rising rapidly. At the same time, successive presidents and Congresses have held the line at spending, and so the budget has practically balanced itself.

The deficit Clinton inherited from George Bush in 1993 was $290 billion. It is below $50 billion this year and, if present trends continue, will disappear entirely by the end of the year. We are told that this may be a temporary benefit that requires adjustment, but by the time the politicians had finished adjusting, they had cuts taxes further and increased spending. Let us hope there is no recession.

Let us also hope that Clinton or his successor, and the next generation of Congressmen, will have the courage to deal with Social Security and Medicare, which will otherwise create a gigantic deficit in 2008.

Whether or not they do, and whether or not the juggling with figures produces an exactly balanced budget by 2002, the US has achieved easily something that Europeans have found impossible. The French and the Germans, let alone the Italians and Spanish, are apparently incapable of bringing their budget deficits down to 3 per cent of GNP, while the Americans are down to zero.

The Europeans are bound by the Maastricht treaty to reach the 3 per cent if they want to join the single currency. Americans have done it by nagging each other. The chief naggers were the Republicans, and their complaints finally persuaded Clinton to take the plunge.

Reagan had famously promised, in 1980, to balance the budget by 1983 "or even by 1982". He tried it by cutting taxes sharply and raising Pentagon spending enormously. What happened was that a deficit, pushed up by recession in the late 1970s to about $70 billion, doubled in Reagan's first year, and then doubled again and stayed well over $200 billion for the rest of his term and George Bush's four years.

For 17 years balancing the budget has been the Republicans' mantra. They have won most presidential elections and control of Congress by accusing the Democrats of wasting the national wealth. They claimed their rivals' only policy was "tax and tax, spend and spend".

THANKS TO THEM OUR BUDGET IS IN THE BLACK!! THEY'RE BILL & NEWT:
MEN IN BLACK
PSSST! NEWT...
WE'RE TAKING CREDIT FOR BALANCING THE BUDGET...
BUT THE BUDGET BALANCED ITSELF!
SHHHH, BILL!! REMEMBER, WE'RE HERE TO FIGHT ALIENS...
.. AND BEING STRAIGHT WITH FOLKS IS ALIEN TO US...
KAL

Now, all of a sudden, they are left bereft. Things are going so well for the Democrats that they may very well recover control of the House of Representatives in 1998 and the Senate in 2000, while holding on to the presidency indefinitely. The Republicans have run out of ideas.

Clinton has stolen all their best and most popular policies, making them his own. "It's the economy, stupid," his campaign manager reminded his team during the 1992 election, and that remains the slogan.

SOME of the credit should go to Bush, who agreed to a restrictive budget in 1990 that included a tax increase. That was the deal that lost him the presidency in 1992, because he had promised "Read my lips, no new taxes".

Clinton did the same in 1993, pushing up taxes again, this time increasing the top rate of income tax. Republicans promised disaster. They called it the biggest tax increase in history (which was nonsense) and asserted that it would drag the economy down into recession. That helped them win Congress in 1994.

But the two budgets, together with the austerities imposed by Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, launched the US into the great boom of the 1990s — and brought the budget painlessly into balance.

Clinton also stole the Republicans' clothes on matters of expenditure. Last month's budget was notable also because it was the first in years that actually gave away substantial sums. For the past eight years, under Bush and Clinton, budgets had been rigorously austere.

For decades past, Congress had increased government spending, on all sorts of worthy, and less worthy, causes because that is what people wanted. Finally, in the 1990s, they called a halt. They have held government spending down, even as revenue has risen, with the happy results that enabled everyone to agree to the balanced budget.

A note of caution creeps in at this point. The deal involves substantial savings in various government programmes, including Medicare and general welfare spending. If they cannot be found, then the budget will not balance after all. But the trend is still there, and if there is a deficit it will be small by European standards.

The Republicans need a new mantra. Reagan used to insist that "government isn't the solution: government is the problem". Clinton now claims the government has solved whatever problem Reagan was talking about — and the Republicans cannot answer him.

Liberal Democrats hate the president for becoming a closet Republican. But the voters love it.

Martin Walker is on holiday

CIA comes clean over spy 'UFOs'

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE Central Intelligence Agency admitted last Sunday that it had lied to the public about the real nature of UFOs during a spate of sightings reported in the 1950s and 1960s to preserve the secrecy of its cold war spy-plane fleets.

The CIA admits in a new report the validity of hundreds of sightings of unidentified flying objects from the public, aviation experts and pilots. They were, it says, the newly developed supersonic spy planes U2 and Blackbird, flying at high altitudes.

"More than half of all UFO reports from the late 1950s through the 1960s were accounted for by manned reconnaissance flights," says the report, The CIA's Role In The Study Of UFOs, 1947-90.

The planes were built at the Area 51, or Dreamland base, in Nevada, whose existence the Pentagon still denies. The U2s flew to more than 60,000ft and the Blackbirds to 80,000ft. Commercial airlines rarely fly above 30,000ft.

The CIA adds that the decision to paint aircraft black, as with Stealth bombers, was not just military camouflage, but to reduce UFO sightings. The report says the U2s silver bodies "reflected the rays of the sun, especially at sunrise and sunset", encouraging sightings of "fiery objects".

UFO fever has become a huge obsession in the United States, spawning hit films such as Men In Black. In such an atmosphere, the CIA's admission is likely to encourage UFO enthusiasts to cry "cover-up".

The air force's attempt to come clean last month on the "UFO crash" in Roswell in 1947 backfired. When it overturned 50 years of statements to say that the mysterious "beings" removed from the crashed craft were high-altitude test dummies, the public refused to believe it.

The report was challenged by John Pike, who is responsible for space policy at the Federation of American Scientists. "The UFO community is definitely on to something here," he said, adding that the admissions merely called into question other federal cover-ups involving UFOs.

Mexico City marchers call a truce

Phil Gunson in Mexico City

A BUSLOAD of blue-uniformed riot police, their plastic shields stacked neatly against a nearby lamp-post, waited in vain outside the interior ministry building in Mexico City last week for a decent-sized riot to break out.

A block away, some of their favourite adversaries — a group of sugar workers from the south-eastern state of Tabasco — were engaged in nothing more threatening than rattling collection tins.

An unnatural calm has descended on the demonstration-prone Mexican capital since the opposition Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) won the July 6 mayoral election, the first in the city for 70 years.

"Once we see that the government has definitely changed," said Perfecto Cabrera, echoing a widely held sentiment, "there will be no more marches."

Mr Cabrera, aged 39, has lost count of the number of demonstrations he has attended in the seven months since he and his comrades set up their city-centre encampment in protest at what they say is a violation of their labour rights.

In the first six months of this year, the city authorities reported almost 1,200 marches, involving a total of more than 500,000 people. But since Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was elected mayor, not a single major incident has held up the traffic in this congested city.

The debtors' organisation El Barzón, which has a well-earned reputation for disruptive activities, has announced that future actions will be confined to the pavements or held at night.

Like the majority of the city's 230-or-so major pressure groups, El Barzón has close ties to the leftwing PRD. Although the party cannot instruct these organisations not to disrupt daily life in the city, its wishes have been made abundantly clear.

With the PRD victory, the Mexico City party boss Armando Quintero said last month, "people will have no reason to march".

It is crucial for Mr Cárdenas that there should be fewer demonstrations, the magazine Voz y Voto's political analyst, José Luis Díaz Moll, said. Mr Cárdenas has made no secret of his intention to stand for the presidency in 2000, and his chances depend on the voters' perception of his performance as mayor.

Moderation does not appeal to radical leaders such as Marco Rascón, who as a PRD federal deputy won a reputation for shock tactics, such as standing in front of President Ernesto Zedillo in a pig mask during the president's state-of-the-union address.

In a newspaper column last week headed "Let's demand the impossible", Mr Rascón called for "generalised, mass mobilisation" and said marches "cannot and should not end".

Mr Rascón is a close ally of Superbarrio, the mysterious, masked veteran of hundreds of Mexico City marches, whose example spawned a whole race of superheroes, including Supergay and Superanimal.

So will Superbarrio be hanging up his cape and mask in response to pleas from the PRD leadership? Not yet, it would appear.

"Some PRD leaders have already pensioned me off," he said. "They're telling me I'm no longer needed. But if the Cárdenas government takes the same approach [as the current authorities], then we'll respond with marches."

The PRD is not due to take over the city until December 5. It will inherit a mess, exacerbated by outgoing city officials who are busy selling duplicate permits for everything from taxis to street stalls.

Sorting it out, according to Superbarrio, "will be a task for superheroes".

Demand for names 'will bring down Internet'

Stuart Millar

THE mounting demand for website names will bring the Internet to the point of collapse within a year, a British information technology consultant said last weekend after winning the latest in a growing number of disputes over domain names.

Sally Tate, managing director of Prince, welcomed the High Court ruling in her company's favour against a United States company, Prince Sports Group, but said it was a "pyrrhic victory" because it highlighted the inadequacies in the current system of naming websites.

She said: "Unless something is done very quickly to come up with a workable framework for the domain name system then the whole Internet will grind to a halt. The Internet community is always saying that it wants to regulate itself, but everyone is just sitting there and nothing is being done."

Ms Tate hopes to organise a series of international summits to hammer out a solution. She said users remained ignorant of the problem despite an incident last month which saw the global e-mail system collapse for several hours because of a problem with the naming system.

The problems centre on the unique address, known as the domain name, assigned to every computer connected to the Internet that allows it to be identified. Addresses will either end with the generic domain, .com, .org or .net, which indicate a global address but are overseen by a US company, or a domain specific to the host country, for example, .uk.

The system originally operated on a first come, first served basis, which was simple to maintain when the Internet was a small network. But the explosion in Internet users in the past five years had led increasingly to clashes between users trying to register identical or similar addresses.

To relieve the pressure on the three global generic domains, now chosen by almost 40 per cent of all hosts, an international accord was signed in Geneva in May proposing the introduction of another seven domains.

The demand problems have been compounded by the fact that Network Solutions Inc., the company that has a monopoly over the global domains, will see its licence expire in April next year. According to Ms Tate, this will bring chaos.

But British Internet experts dismissed Ms Tate's predictions as "scaremongering". William Black, managing director of Nominet, the non-profit organisation that oversees the .uk domain, said: "I think that it is hyperbole. A way will be found around the problem."

Roger Cowe writes: The biggest obstacle to the widespread use of the Internet for shopping could be overcome with the launch this week of a system for improving security.

Credit card groups Visa and MasterCard have developed a method of electronic identification that they hope will give shoppers the confidence to use credit cards to buy and sell on the net.

The Secure Electronic Transaction (SET) system has been tested for six months in the US and Europe.

A consortium of 38 banks is involved in the trial, including Barclays, Abbey National and Lloyds TSB.

A SET symbol has been launched, which will appear on retailers' web sites to indicate that the shops comply with the tough new security requirements developed by the credit card consortium.

Only last week the UK bookstore chains Waterstone's and Dillons revealed that they were to develop their own Internet sales service to compete with the Seattle-based pioneer Amazon.

The development of electronic commerce has been held back by widespread fears of shoppers that sending credit card details over the net will allow fraudsters to run up huge bills on their accounts.

The SET system aims to prevent this by introducing two complex security levels.

"Digital certificates" are used to authenticate the identity of both consumers and merchants. The software then decodes the order information and forwards the encrypted payment information to the credit card processor for authorisation and settlement.

In Brief

THAILAND has hammered out terms of a rescue package with the International Monetary Fund aimed at bolstering the country's declining foreign reserves and bringing investment into its economy.

KATSUYUKI SUGITA, president of Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank, has been heavily punished for violating Japan's securities and banking laws. Key divisions of Nomura Securities and Dai-Ichi Kangyo Bank will be shut until the end of the year.

THE British Airways cabin crew dispute cost $200 million, and the profits for the quarter to June 30 fell to $228 million, the airline said.

BRITAIN gave a crucial boost to the integration of Europe's aerospace industry by deciding to join the five European partners in backing the $23 billion Future Large Aircraft project.

THE UK government stamped its anti-inflation credentials on the financial markets by naming Mervyn King, a hardline monetarist hawk, as deputy governor of the Bank of England.

THE cost of the UK pensions mis-selling scandal is likely to top $8 billion after industry leaders admitted underestimating the scale of the problem.

THE UK High Court disqualified George Maclean, aged 55, a former Barings bank senior executive, from holding a directorship for four years.

HSBC, the international bank group, announced interim pre-tax profits of $4.2 billion.

CARMAKER BMW saw first-half profits climb by almost a third as foreign buyers clocked up orders for its new 5-series and Z3 models. Net profits rose to $233 million.

THE UK housing market was boosted by news that prices rose 12.2 per cent in the past 12 months. Meanwhile the UK government wants to streamline the system of buying and selling houses to eliminate gazumping.

INTERNATIONAL business faces disruption from a strike by United Parcel Service workers, after thousands of their US staff were made redundant.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates August 4	Sterling rates July 28
Australia	2.2062-2.2091	2.2188-2.2217
Austria	21.37-21.39	21.19-21.21
Belgium	62.68-62.79	62.17-62.27
Canada	2.2485-2.2507	2.2645-2.2667
Denmark	11.57-11.58	11.46-11.47
France	10.24-10.25	10.15-10.16
Germany	3.0384-3.0411	3.0125-3.0153
Hong Kong	12.62-12.63	12.64-12.65
Ireland	1.1285-1.1311	1.1239-1.1266
Italy	2,973-2,977	2,930-2,935
Japan	192.68-192.01	192.09-192.34
Netherlands	3.4222-3.4251	3.3938-3.3968
New Zealand	2.5329-2.5372	2.5418-2.5452
Norway	12.52-12.54	12.44-12.46
Portugal	307.46-307.74	304.32-304.67
Spain	256.57-256.79	254.07-254.27
Sweden	13.08-13.10	12.97-12.99
Switzerland	2.4864-2.4895	2.4780-2.4812
USA	1.6304-1.6314	1.6335-1.6346
ECU	1.5383-1.5402	1.5238-1.5276

FTSE100 Share Index up 33.1 at 4896.7. FTSE 250 Index up 23.6 at 4468.0. Gold down $1.60 at $324.55.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Blair makes small dent in Tory Lords' majority

NO FEWER THAN 57 new life peers were created at the weekend — the largest number ever to be named in a single announcement in modern times — as the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, began his attempt to reverse the inbuilt Tory domination of the House of Lords, and his predecessor, John Major, rewarded some of his most trusted allies.

The new appointments will not, however, make serious inroads into the Tory majority. Mr Blair's 31 new life peers will bring Labour's total in the Lords to 142, while Major's 15 new creations raise the Tory total to 167. The Tories, in addition, have 327 hereditary peers, while Labour has only 15. Mr Blair, however, is committed to abolishing the voting rights of hereditary peers, but this will not happen until next year at the earliest.

Unfazed by criticism over the introduction of businessmen into the Government, Mr Blair included five prominent business figures in his list, along with a gaggle of former MPs, union leaders and figures from the arts, including the crime writer, Ruth Rendell, and the film producer, David Puttnam.

Mr Major's list was significant for its omission of Norman Lamont, the only former Chancellor in recent times not to have been offered a peerage. Sources close to Mr Major denied that this was in revenge for Mr Lamont's disloyalty to the former prime minister.

Mr Major made his former deputy, Michael Heseltine, a Companion of Honour. Nearly all the new peerages went to former ministers and MPs.

Although Labour is traditionally sniffy about the whole honours system, this did not prevent Mr Blair from hinting that good school-teaching might be recognised in future honours lists with, perhaps, a knighthood — "Sirs for the sirs," so to speak.

THE BBC risked the wrath of Middle England by tinkering with the schedules of Radio 4, scrapping some long-running favourites and giving others different formats or shifting them to new time slots.

Though the shake-up is the most radical since Radio 4 took over from the Home Service 30 years ago, its controller, James Boyle, wielded the axe more sparingly than some had predicted. Radio 4 devotees will not lay siege to Broadcasting House, as had been feared, but they will be watching for anything that smacks of "dumbing down".

The changes are designed to restore Radio 4's dwindling listenership. It attracts a respectable 8.3 million a week, but the ratings collapse outside peak hours.

LABOUR'S national executive suspended the entire district party in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, following allegations of council corruption involving expenses, foreign trips and lavish days out at the races.

"Donnygate", which has been simmering for some months, is the worst example of Labour council excesses to have surfaced since the Poulson scandals of the 1960s. Expenses claims, alleged to have reached £20,000 a year in some cases, are now under investigation.

Labour's determination to put its own house in order was demonstrated not only by Donnygate but also by its suspension in June of Bob Wareing, MP for Liverpool West Derby, for failing to disclose his interest in a private company he set up to do business with Russia. He was last week also suspended from the Commons for seven days after making a humiliating apology to the House.

AN INVESTIGATION was ordered by Tony Blair into the death of a Labour MP who left a suicide note which blamed two senior party colleagues for a whispering campaign that could have contributed to his death.

Gordon McMaster, MP for Paisley South, was found slumped behind the wheel of his car in the garage of his home. He had been suffering from depression for some time and was receiving treatment for ME, or chronic fatigue syndrome. He had received poison pen letters and had been the subject of rumours alleging he was a homosexual suffering from HIV, which he denied.

In his letter, Mr McMaster named Tommy Graham, Labour MP for Renfrew West, and Don Dixon, a former MP since elevated to the House of Lords. Both men denied any involvement in spreading malicious rumours.

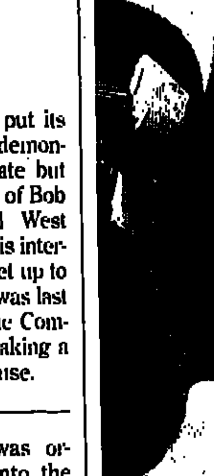
THE FACT that a judge nodded off during the proceedings does not necessarily make for an unfair trial. This was the conclusion of the Court of Appeal which dismissed an appeal by Thomas Moringiello, who claimed that his conviction for deception was unsafe because the judge had fallen asleep during the trial in Liverpool.

Counsel for Moringiello complained that Judge Hamilton had fallen asleep "on occasions" during the three-week trial. A solicitor's clerk confirmed that he had seen him dozing.

"It does not follow that because a judge is asleep, that prejudice has been caused at all," the Appeal Court judges ruled. "What is vital is that a judge should sum up the case fairly to the jury and put the evidence in summary form comprehensively before them."

Mr Moringiello, a former US lawyer, is serving an 18-month prison sentence.







Bone fragments are shown to Bernie Grant MP during a visit to Ilfracombe last week PHOTO MAN...

'Caribbean rebels' await a heroes' burial

THE remains of what is believed to be a group of St Lucian "freedom fighters" could be returned to the Caribbean for a heroes' burial after lying for more than 200 years beneath the sands of a north Devon cove, if DNA tests confirm their origin, *writes Geoffrey Gibbs*.

In October 1796, the London, a 300-ton barque, was en route to Bristol with a cargo of booty and black prisoners of war captured fighting for the French in the Caribbean.

As the ship headed for Ilfracombe to shelter from a storm it struck the rocks of Raparee Cove and sank. The 60 prisoners, chained in the hold of the ship, were among those who perished as the ship went down and were said to have been buried in a mass grave on the shore.

The discovery of bone fragments by historian and archaeologist Pat Barrow last February was immediately linked to the tragedy and led to calls for Britain to apologise for its involvement in the slave trade.

However, slavery was abolished on St Lucia in 1792 in the wake of the French revolution. The prisoners who drowned in the London are revered as freedom fighters who fought on the side of the French when the British captured the island four years later.

"These were not slaves, they were free St Lucia men," says Ben Bousquet, a spokesman for the island's Governor General. "We would like the bones of our heroes to be buried in St Lucia. But we have to be sure these were our freedom fighters."

The task of identification has fallen to Mark Horton, a Bristol university archaeologist called in by the local authority last month to complete excavations. Although he believes the remains are those of the freedom fighters, Dr Horton is taking a cautious line until the results of tests are known later this year.

Death from CJD brings cluster in Kent to six

Kamal Ahmed

EVIDENCE of a cluster of deaths in Kent from the human equivalent of mad cow disease was reinforced this week when it emerged that the latest victim had close links with the county.

The National Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh has confirmed that Susan Carey is the 21st victim of a recent strain of the degenerative disease linked to eating meat from cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

In the 1980s Mrs Carey, who died five months ago aged 36, lived with her husband, Henry, and family at Mersham, near Ashford, where Mr Carey was a labourer on a farm that had a dairy and a beef herd.

There have been five other deaths from a new variant of the disease, v-CJD, in the same area, compared with only one in the whole of London.

In 1985 the first case of BSE was diagnosed in Smarden, Kent, and the county has had more cases than the national average.

Although scientists are reluctant to point to any causes of the CJD cluster, a connection has been made with one of the worst agricultural accidents in Britain in the 1960s. The government had to clear thousands of tonnes of topsoil from the area after a factory accidentally contaminated two acres of farmland with an organochlorine pesticide.

Scientists admitted at the time that nobody knew how long the chemical, which is highly toxic to the central nervous system, would last in the soil.

Organochlorine poisoning is one of two main theories to explain how spongiform encephalopathy spread to cattle. Some scientists say that pesticides used on cattle and land caused the brain-wasting disease.

The other theory is that cattle were fed on the remains of sheep suffering from scrapie, a disease similar to BSE, and on recycled remains of other cows.

An inquest into Mrs Carey's death, adjourned pending investigations by the CJD unit, is expected to reconvene next month.

Mr Carey is demanding compensation for his wife's death, which he feels was directly linked to eating meat. "I think it is scandalous that the farmers who have supplied the meat which presumably gave Sue the disease are getting billions of pounds in compensation and we are getting nothing," he said.

Portuguese slate jet deal

THE row over the Government's controversial decision to per... the sale of Hawk jets to Indonesi... erupted again last week, wri... *Rebecca Smithers*.

The Portuguese prime minister Antonio Guterres, telephoned To... Blair at 10 Downing Street to co... plain of his government's "displea... sure" at the deal, originally agree... by the Conservative government.

Downing Street confirmed th... Mr Guterres had spoken to ... Blair about the matter.

Mr Blair had "reaffirmed" th... despite the decision announced ... the Foreign Secretary, Robin Co... last week, the Government wa... ban future arms sales to countr... with a poor human rights record.

A statement from Mr Guterres' office said Mr Blair had told ... Portuguese prime minister that ... was not practical to pull out of ... Indonesian deal because contr... had already been signed under ... previous administration.

Despite new guidelines restr... ing future weapons exports to co... tries with poor track record... human rights, Mr Cook announ... that the deal would go ahe... prompting criticism that the G... ernment had failed the first te... its ethical foreign policy.

Fishing quota hoppers win right to sue

Clare Dyer

BRITISH taxpayers face a bill for millions of pounds from quota-hopping Spanish trawler owners following a High Court ruling last week.

The court ruled that 97 owners and managers of fishing vessels are entitled "in principle" to claim millions of pounds in compensation for the period they were excluded from fishing against UK quotas after Britain barred them by the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

But Lord Justice Hobhouse, Mr Justice Collins and Mr Justice Moses dismissed a claim for further millions in exemplary damages, ruling that Britain did not act in bad faith or in an arbitrary manner in passing the act.

The vessel owners, led by Factortame Ltd, won a declaration from the High Court that UK breaches of European Community law "were sufficiently serious to give rise to liability for any damage that may subsequently be shown to have been caused to the applicants".

The vessel owners estimate each boat lost between £350,000 and £500,000 because of the Government's unlawful action and, subject to any appeal, will now be seeking to to prove and quantify the damage in each individual case.

The claims arise because, under the act, which was brought in after quota-hopping became a problem in the 1980s, a new fishing vessel register was set up.

Only boats which were at least 75 per cent British owned could be registered and therefore entitled to a share of the national fishing quota.

Last year the European Court ruled that victims of breaches of EU law could recover damages, provided the breaches were "sufficiently serious" and there was "a direct causal link" between the breaches and the damage complained of.

The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations estimate the British fishing industry is losing "massive percentages" of catches equivalent to £100 million a year because of the quota-hoppers.

A Ministry of Agriculture spokesman said officials were studying the judgment before deciding whether to appeal.

Privacy law may curb media

Richard Norton-Taylor

SWEEPING proposals designed to control the use of personal information were announced by the Government last week in a move which will lead to a statutory right of privacy for the first time in British law.

The proposals, which could have huge implications for the media, were published by the Home Office under a little-noticed Brussels directive which will be introduced throughout the European Union next year.

The directive, which covers the way information is gathered, processed and stored, was agreed amid growing concern about the use of personal data by government agencies. But it also embraces companies and the media.

Member states, it says, must "protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of natural persons, and in particular their right to privacy with respect to the processing of personal data". It introduces a specific statutory obligation, backed up by the courts, for individuals to be told who is processing their data — a phrase which, officials say, could catch "foot-in-the-door" journalism and long-range photographs of celebrities such as the Princess of Wales.

Though the Home Office makes it clear that there will be exemptions, including the police and security services, it rules out a blanket exemption for the media. The directive says the media, writers and artists could have exemptions, but "only if they are necessary to reconcile the right to privacy with the rules governing freedom of expression".

The Prime Minister said last week he is opposed to privacy legislation. But there are concerns that measures will be slipped through without proper debate. The Government plans to incorporate the European Convention of Human Rights into British law. The convention includes a general right of privacy, which is not aimed at the media but could embrace it.

Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, has suggested that Parliament might prefer to fashion a law of privacy rather than leave it to judges to interpret it. The document presented to Parliament last week by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, says the question of how far the new data protection law should apply to journalists raises "very difficult points of principle" about the rights and responsibilities of the media. "The key issue is how to balance the individual's legitimate expectation of privacy against the public's right to know. This balance is far from easy to strike."

Ulster car bomb found

Stuart Millar

A REPUBLICAN splinter group was last week accused of throwing the Northern Ireland peace process into doubt after a massive car bomb was found outside a hotel in County Fermanagh.

Unionist MPs urged the Government not to scale down security in the wake of the IRA ceasefire after the discovery of the Ford Orion containing 1,000lb of home-made explosives outside the Carrybridge Hotel at Lisbellaw, near Enniskillen. The Royal Ulster Constabulary said the bomb could have caused widespread loss of life and damage.

No organisation has claimed responsibility but the Continuity Army Council, which opposes the IRA ceasefire, is believed to have been responsible.

But with no IRA denial of involvement, loyalists were quick to claim it must have been involved.

The Ulster Unionist deputy leader, John Taylor, said the incident suggested the relaxation of security measures was "ill-advised".

Peter Robinson, the Democratic Unionist MP for East Belfast, said the British and Irish governments had been fooled by the republicans. "This should bring a cold shower of reality to the dreamers," he said.

The car lying wrecked outside a County Fermanagh hotel after the army carried out a controlled explosion PHOTOGRAPH: BRIAN LITTLE

Bridgewater verdicts quashed

Duncan Campbell and Kamal Ahmed

THE actions of a group of police officers involved in the Carl Bridgewater murder case are to be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Court of Appeal announced last week. The court formally quashed the convictions of the four men jailed for life in 1979 and expressed regret at the "deceit" which led to their imprisonment.

But there was anger at parts of the judgment from the surviving members of the Bridgewater Four, who were convicted of killing the newspaper delivery boy at Yew Tree Farm in Staffordshire. They claimed the Court of Appeal hinted of "no smoke without fire" by saying there was sufficient evidence for one of the men, Vincent Hickey, to have stood trial.

The convictions of Jimmy Robinson, aged 63, Michael Hickey, aged 37, Vincent Hickey, aged 45, and Patrick Molloy, who died in jail in 1981, were quashed by Lord Justice Roth, Mr Justice Hidden and Mr Justice Mitchell. The men were released in February pending their appeal.

"This is another case of miscarriage of justice, which is a matter of regret to this court," said Lord Justice Roth. He said the case had caused "grave concern" and hence matters were being referred to the DPP.

Allegations against officers include the forgery of a statement purportedly by Vincent Hickey, the altering of statements and the use of "oppressive tactics".

Offenders face travel ban

BANS on travelling abroad and on driving are to be introduced as new general punishments for non-motoring offences under plans unveiled last week by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to ensure that "community sentences" such as probation are no longer seen as a soft option, *writes Alan Travis*.

Mr Straw intends to give courts the power to confiscate the passports of all those given non-prison sentences. He also announced that powers to introduce driving bans for non-motoring offences will be used from next year on a pilot basis.

"There should be nothing soft about community punishment," Mr Straw told MPs. "I want to strengthen the credibility of probation supervision."

The measures are part of a package designed to speed up the criminal justice system and ease the pressure on overcrowded prisons. Other measures include:

- ❑ Extension of experiments with house arrest curfews enforced by electronic tagging;
- ❑ Asking the Court of Appeal to introduce sentencing guidelines for all main criminal offences to bring greater consistency;
- ❑ Implementing Michael Howard's plans to give the courts the power to "name and shame" juveniles.

The Liberal Democrats' home affairs spokesman, Alan Beith, said the package would do little to deal with soaring prison numbers. And the shadow home secretary, Brian Mawhinney, teased Mr Straw that his package contained so many Conservative policies that it seemed to get more support among Tory MPs than among Mr Straw's supporters.

In Brief

RICHARD WILSON, the top official at the Home Office who survived the turbulent years of Michael Howard's rule, has been appointed Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service. He replaces Sir Robin Butler, who will become Master of University College, Oxford when he retires in January.

A BRITISH AIRWAYS pilot, Captain John Jones, was hailed for his skill after he safely landed his turboprop airliner and its 70 passengers and crew with one of its three wheels out of action at Manchester airport.

DEATH RATES among teenagers from heroin-like drugs and amphetamines have more than trebled in 10 years. Between 1985 and 1995 a total of 463 teenagers died from accidental drug poisoning.

ALAN PARKER, Britain's most successful film director, will later this year return from the United States to become chairman of the British Film Institute.

DEFENCE ministers approved the multiple vaccination of British troops heading for the Gulf war in 1990 either unaware of or unconvinced by a Department of Health warning that certain combinations might be dangerous, it was admitted. Meanwhile a musician poisoned during orchestral rehearsals by a pesticide suspected as a cause of Gulf war syndrome has been awarded £1.9 million damages.

DAVE MOOR, a doctor who admitted he had helped many terminally-ill people to die, was arrested over the death last month of one of his patients, George Liddell. Mr Liddell's relatives oppose any police action.

MORE than 1.5 million car tax cheats could have their vehicles crushed in a government campaign to end road tax fraud amounting to £175 million a year.

THE Queen Mother marked her 97th birthday with a walkabout among well-wishers outside her home, Clarence House in London.

A CONSULTANT surgeon has been suspended following allegations that he let a 16-year-old work-experience schoolboy assist in an operation at the Mayday clinic in south London.

ALEX KITSON, the former deputy-general secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union from 1980-86, has died, aged 75.

LORD GOOLD, Lord Lieutenant of Renfrewshire and former Scottish Conservative party chairman, has died, aged 63.



Uxbridge defeat a lesson in selection

Ewen MacAskill and Rebecca Smithers

THE Government defended its system of selecting byelection candidates last week in the face of criticism from local activists after the Tories swept to a surprisingly comfortable victory in the Uxbridge byelection. The result marks the Conservative party's first byelection win for 8½ years.

Senior Labour spokesmen insisted the system had worked well for the past 10 years and said they saw no reason to change it now. Local activists claimed the party could have won if it had stuck with the candidate who fought the general election, David Williams, a local councillor, rather than the imposed one, Andy Slaughter, a barrister with no close links with the constituency.

Mr Williams got within 724 votes of victory on May 1 in the previously safe Tory seat. But Mr Slaughter lost to the Tory candidate, John Randall, by 3,766 votes. With Labour still high in opinion polls nationally, a much closer result had been widely forecast.

A Labour spokesman said the party would review the byelection campaign, as it always did, win or lose, to see what lessons could be learned. But there was no intention to alter the system of having byelection candidates chosen by a special panel rather than by the constituency party.

He said that byelection candidates came under intense scrutiny and Mr Slaughter had been considered a better prospect than the more leftwing Mr Williams. The spokesman added it could be argued that if Mr Williams had stood, the scale of the defeat might have been bigger.

By choosing Mr Slaughter, the focus was on national issues rather than local ones, which, a Labour source said, was just as well as the local Labour council was not widely popular in the constituency.

Mr Williams said he could not say for sure that he would have won if he had been the candidate again. But he did say he had heard on the doorsteps people saying they would have voted for him if he had been Labour's choice.

Less coy was Peter James, chairman of the Labour group on Hillingdon council, which includes Uxbridge, who said: "Far from the Tories winning this election, I think the Labour party did a very good job at losing this election.

"We had a very good candidate at the general election, Councillor David Williams, who should have been standing at this election.

"And I am certainly convinced that if he had been standing we would have been waking up this morning with a Labour MP."

The system of having candidates chosen from the centre rather than locally was introduced after the Govan byelection in 1987 when the Labour candidate, Bob Gillespie, was left floundering in a television debate with the Scottish National Party candidate, Jim Sillars, who eventually won.

The result in Uxbridge is a huge boost for the Conservative party as they plan their fightback against the Labour government. At the same time, it has dashed Labour's hopes of keeping the momentum of the post-election euphoria.

The Tory leader, William Hague, who until now was the party's most recent byelection victor, said the result signalled a fresh start for the Tories. "This a great start. Trust is returning to the Conservatives. We are back in business."

Mr Randall, who is a local candidate, declared: "The Conservative party is no longer lecturing but listening."

Mr Slaughter declared it would have been "a miracle" had Labour snatched the seat from the Tories. In modern British politics, governments have only four times won byelection seats from the opposition. The last was in 1982.

The byelection was triggered by the death of Sir Michael Shersby, a popular constituency MP who had held the seat for 25 years, just one week after the general election.

Result

John Randall (Con)	16,288
Andrew Slaughter (Lab)	12,522
Keith Kerr (Lib Dem)	1,792
Majority	3,766
Swing	6.04% Lab to Con
Turnout	31,867
Electorate	57,733

All my people, right here, right now . . . Oasis songwriter Noel Gallagher last week bonded with Tony Blair at the Prime Minister's reception for stars of the entertainment world. Gallagher said: 'I congratulated him on his success and he congratulated me on mine.' Other partygoers included fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, comedian Eddie Izzard and actor Sir Ian McKellen PHOTO: REBECCA NAD

Cash-for-questions MPs faced ban

David Hencke

THE former Conservative MPs Tim Smith and Sir Michael Grylls would have been suspended for up to six months from the House of Commons for their part in the cash-for-questions scandal if they had not stood down at the general election.

The Commons standards and privileges committee last week said both MPs would have been suspended for a "substantial period". Two other MPs involved in the scandal, Sir Andrew Bowden, the defeated MP for Brighton Kemptown, and former whip Michael Brown, who lost Cleethorpes, would also have been suspended for a shorter period.

MPs on the committee were so incensed by not being able to take any action against the offenders that they are to investigate whether they should be given new powers to fine former MPs and other people implicated in the scandal, such as the lobbyist Ian Greer. Under present rules the committee had two courses of action for former MPs. They could have been ordered to appear at the bar of the House to be admonished by the Speaker, or Parliament could have sent them to prison, which last happened in 1881.

The committee's report follows the investigation by Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, into all the MPs involved in the scandal who accepted cash or payments from Mohamed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods. Michael Brown and Sir Michael Grylls were found not to have declared other payments they had received from Mr Greer.

The most severe criticism was for Sir Michael, the former MP for Surrey North West. Sir Gordon said he had "deliberately misled" the select committee on members' interests in 1990 by "seriously understating" the number of commission payments he had received, and by omitting to inform them of other fees received from Mr Greer. The report says: "It is quite clear from the evidence assembled by the Commissioner that Sir Michael Grylls's business relationship with Mr Greer was a close one which lasted over several years. The extent of his relationship is scarcely apparent from his entries over that period in the Register of Members' Interests.

"Deliberately misleading a select committee is certainly a contempt of the House: taken together with our findings, we conclude that the conduct of Sir Michael Grylls fell seriously below the standards the House is entitled to expect of its members."

The committee was due to reconvene this week to discuss what action should be taken against Neil Hamilton, the former minister who is still challenging Sir Gordon's verdict that he took up to £25,000 in cash from Mr Al Fayed.

● Sir Gordon last week proposed new rules to restrict MPs' speaking rights if they take cash from sponsors. Under the new rules — now out for consultation — MPs face being banned from speaking for a year on behalf of individuals, trade unions and companies who donate £2,000 or more to their constituency associates.

Trade minister embroiled in 'conflict of interest' row

Roger Cowe and David Hencke

LORD SIMON was expected to face new allegations of conflict of interest this week with the disclosure that he has been involved in the preparation of a new report on policing Britain's boardrooms.

Details of his work on the report, both before and after he became the Government's trade and competitiveness minister, will provide new opportunities for the Conservatives to press home their attack on Lord Simon for his continued shareholding in British Petroleum, where he was formerly chairman.

Lord Simon's decision to hold on to his BP shares in an offshore Jersey trust means that he is vulnerable to criticism each time he is involved in policy affecting Britain's companies.

The Hampel committee on corporate governance — headed by ICI boss Ronnie Hempel — was due to publish its interim report this week with recommendations on how Britain's boardrooms should be run. It is expected to argue that regulations should be relaxed to avoid stifling competitiveness, angering campaigners who believe the rules covering directors' duties and pay should be tightened.

Lord Simon joined the committee when it was formed in 1995. He is thought to have resigned when appointed a minister — with responsibilities covering the same area of policy.

The Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, accused the Conservatives of launching a "very unpleasant, unattractive, hypocritical barrage of smears and innuendo" against Lord Simon. However, the former BP chairman is facing renewed pressure to sell his shares or resign from the Government in the face of increasing claims that he cannot avoid conflicts of interest.

Lord Simon: 'thick-skinned'

Writing in the Times newspaper last week, Lord Simon strongly rejected the "charges and innuendoes" of his Tory critics. He made it clear that he has no intention of resigning from the Government over the issue. "I have a thick skin and will not be deflected from the challenge of helping Britain win in Europe," he said.

But he warned that the allegations — which the Tories have used to maximum effect to embarrass Mr Blair in the closing days of the parliamentary session — could deter other senior businessmen from holding office.

His defence of his position came on the same day as new rules tightening financial probity for ministers were announced by Downing Street.

The rewritten code says "ministers must scrupulously avoid any danger of actual or apparent conflict of interest between their ministerial position and their private financial interests".

They should also "either dispose of any financial interest giving rise to the actual or perceived conflict or take alternative steps to prevent it". Downing Street said that Lord Simon took the right alternative steps.

The new rules also say that ministers who knowingly mislead MPs will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has also to be informed in good time about a range of other appointments, like royal commissions, quangos, public corporations, nationalised industries and even local appointments if they are thought to "excite an unusual amount of public interest".

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Prosecution service faces race inquiry

Alan Travis

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, last week ordered an independent judicial inquiry into the handling by the police and Crown Prosecution Service of racist attacks in Britain four years after the murder of a black youth, Stephen Lawrence, in south London.

The inquiry, to be headed by the former High Court judge and SAS colonel, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, will have the power to call the five white youths acquitted in a private prosecution of Stephen Lawrence's death.

It is also expected to look at racism in the criminal justice system.

Mr Straw said: "I believe the establishment of this inquiry will allow the concerns of the Lawrence family and others to be fully addressed and will identify the lessons learned from this tragic case which will be relevant to the future handling of racially-motivated crimes by the criminal justice system."

Sir William had a hardline reputation as a High Court judge. He will be supported by the black Bishop of Stepney, the Rt Rev John Sentamu, Dr Richard Stone, chairman of the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, and Thomas Cook, the former deputy chief constable of West Yorkshire.

Stephen Lawrence was a promising 18-year-old A level student who was stabbed to death with a 10-inch blade while waiting at a bus stop in Eltham, south London.

Five white youths — David Norris, aged 20, Neil Acourt, aged 21, Jamie Acourt, aged 19, Gary Dobson, aged 21 and Luke Knight, aged 20 — were acquitted after an unprecedented private prosecution by the family collapsed when the evidence of a key witness was ruled inadmissible.

They refused to answer questions at the inquest, which found Stephen had been unlawfully killed by a group of five white youths in an unprovoked racist attack.

It will be up to Sir William to decide if they should be called to give evidence. Lawyers were divided over whether the inquiry would have the power to compel them to give evidence in a case where they had already stood trial.

Stephen Lawrence's father, Neville, said after a private meeting with Mr Straw: "We are happy with what we have got today, but we have waited four years for this. The family would still like to see the people who killed our son behind bars."

The official terms of reference ask Sir William to inquire into "matters arising from the death of Stephen Lawrence in April 1993" and to "identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially-motivated crime". The inquiry will start in October.

The family's lawyer, Imran Khan, said that the inquiry vindicated their four-year campaign. "Had the police in this case investigated as they should have done, we would not have had to have knocked on the Home Secretary's door in order to have a public inquiry," he said.

● The Director of Public Prosecutions, Dame Barbara Mills, agreed to fresh restrictions on her powers after judges ordered a third review in one week of a CPS decision not to charge police officers.

Her decision not to prosecute officers accused of torturing a robbery suspect follows two separate cases of death in police custody where inquest juries returned verdicts of unlawful killing.

Quarantine for pets 'to end next year'

Ewen MacAskill

PASSPORTS for pets are expected to be given the go-ahead by the Home Office to end the long periods in quarantine imposed on dogs, cats and other animals taken abroad by their owners.

Government sources this week confirmed that the scheme, under which pets that carry proof of vaccination against rabies will be allowed straight into the country, could begin as early as next year.

Pressure for an end to the months in quarantine increased with the publicity given to Chris Patten, the former governor of Hong Kong, who complained about his dogs having to go into quarantine.

The Home Office, under the Conservatives, was several times on the verge of scrapping the quarantine rule but stopped at the last minute, fearful of being open to a charge of being the Government that allowed rabies into Britain.

Although it is illogical to keep pets in quarantine whose owners can prove they do not have rabies, it is an issue that still makes the Home Office jittery.

A Home Office spokesman said of the scheme: "We are still reviewing this. A decision is not imminent."

But other government sources said the scheme was well advanced. Under the new rules, pets will have their own passports listing vaccinations, with microchip implants to prove their identity.

The Government would like details of the scheme to be announced in the autumn to allow holidaymakers to build their pets into their vacation plans for next summer.

Among objections to the present 100-year-old quarantine laws is that many animals suffer and die as a result of their isolation. There is also concern about the distress caused to animals left in temporary accommodation while their owners go on holiday.

Britain has long cherished its freedom from rabies, which was once rampant in Europe. But experts expect that rabies, will arrive eventually in Britain. The most likely source will not be from pets who go through the proper channels but from an uncontrolled source, such as rats carried on cargo boats or disgruntled petowners who smuggle their animals in because they feel the present laws are too stringent.

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Bombing the peace process

THE TRAGIC slaughter in Jerusalem obliges us to refocus upon a crisis that is no less dangerous because it appeared to have become slightly less intense. The obvious lesson, as always with such terrorist attacks, is that the longer the peace process drags on unproductively, the more opportunities are offered for it to be derailed by extremism. What is harder to achieve is a proper understanding of the underlying cause. This is not the battle of Algiers. Appalling as these bomb outrages are, they occur relatively infrequently — the last one was four months ago. The question "why now?" needs to be considered calmly.

The initial reaction from the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, was to accuse Yasser Arafat of breaking a promise to rein in the Muslim militants. He demanded words of condemnation as well as condolence, and "suitable steps" against the bombers. It is hard to tell how far Mr Netanyahu believes that Mr Arafat has the ability to control the bombers but is not exercising it — or to what extent he is scoring an easy point. For the record, Mr Arafat and his lieutenants have condemned as well as condoled. Perhaps his security forces are not doing as much as they could to counter the terrorists. But this aspect (hard to verify in the murky intelligence world) must be balanced against the political reality of Arab terrorism in Israel: the person whose cause suffers most from every new bomb is not Mr Netanyahu: it is Mr Arafat.

It can hardly be coincidental that the bombs exploded in the marketplace just when the peace process was, after months of deadlock, limpingly getting under way. While Mr Netanyahu continues to refuse to halt the settlement building at Har Homa, he has clawed back some negotiating credibility by halting another, more maverick, project in East Jerusalem. Last week, the Israeli foreign minister, David Levy, and the Palestinian Authority's Nabil Shaath announced the immediate resumption of stalled negotiations to deal with such practical issues as the Gaza airport and seaport projects. Both sides appeared to be limbering up for bigger concessions to be brokered by the United States envoy, Dennis Ross. There was a chance of at least slightly shifting the stalemate about which Mr Arafat spoke so gloomily last month in London. Then he said that it gave encouragement to the extremists. Now they have intervened to prolong it.

The extremists' motives — expressed on their behalf in the more radical section of the Arab press — are transparent. They regard Mr Arafat, by reopening talks before a proper halt has been called to settlement building, as having executed a "humiliating retreat". The bomb is a crater in the path of negotiations and a further blow to Mr Arafat's credibility. For President Clinton to echo Mr Netanyahu (while admitting he has no evidence) does not help at all. Only prompt and productive negotiations can thwart the bombers.

Blair must stick to his new rules

WHEN the new British government ordered a revision of Whitehall's document entitled Questions of Procedure for Ministers it must have seemed a fairly straightforward matter. Labour had succeeded a government that had become a byword for blurred standards. The Tories' record on ministerial discretion was tarnished, with Michael Howard its most persistent offender. A succession of ministerial moves from public office to private boardroom had caused indignation. Ministerial standards over the 18 years of Conservative rule had declined, and were an easy target as Labour set out its appeal as a party with clean hands and high minds. For Labour, arriving in power with a halo around its head, tightening Questions of Procedure for Ministers must have seemed a logical move.

Three months on, the revisions have now been published. A document that had grown haphazardly over recent decades (and which John Major was the first prime minister to publish) has now become something more substantial and coherent. Questions of Procedure has now transmuted into A Code of Conduct and Guidance on Procedures for Ministers. Tony Blair's introduction makes clear that he expects all members of his government to work within its letter and spirit. Several sections have been tightened and strengthened. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament, for example, will now be "expected to offer their resignation to the prime minister", a formulation which might have dished several members of the Major administration. There is an unmistakable new strictness of tone about ministerial travel and the acceptance of gifts and hospitality which is in line with public feeling and will be widely welcomed. But there is also an unprecedented emphasis on No 10's controlling authority, which ought to raise liberal hackles. The Downing Street press office's leading role, not just among Whitehall press departments but at the heart of all government decision-making, is now set in stone. The emphasis on the rigid control of information throughout the new document is shocking, and runs completely counter to the continuing protestations that Labour is genuinely interested in passing an effective Freedom of Information Act.

The document appears, however, at a time when the Government is facing its first big challenge on a question of ministerial business ethics. This is an area in which Labour is desperate to differentiate itself from the last Conservative government; the party's indignation at the campaign against the $3.2 million shareholding of Lord Simon, the former BP chairman who is now a junior minister at the Department of Trade, is therefore intense. In the Commons last week, Mr Blair said that Lord Simon had broken no rule and had behaved with complete propriety. That may well be so. However, Mr Blair should not accept that it was sufficient for the permanent secretary at the DTI to approve Lord Simon's handling of the matter. The new Code of Conduct states that ministers must "scrupulously avoid" any actual or apparent conflicts of interest between their ministerial position and their private financial interests, and stresses that such matters are for secretaries of state, and if necessary for the Prime Minister, to decide. Mr Blair is clearly very proud of his ability to persuade business leaders to work for and with the Labour government. But he should be careful not to let his pride sway his judgment about such ministers' financial positions. The strictness of the new code is right, and Mr Blair should not be so resentful about demands that it is fully complied with.

Iran edges into the future

IRAN HAS been the Great Satan for the United States (and vice versa) for a very long time — except for a brief wobble during the Gulf war against Iraq. European countries have also been alienated by suspicions of terrorist involvement and — particularly for Britain — the Salman Rushdie affair. Against this background, hopes of change under the new president, Mohammed Khatami, who took power in Tehran last Sunday, have been very muted. Yet it would be a mistake to talk down too far the possibility of more hopeful changes — and in doing so perhaps to make them less likely.

Mr Khatami comes to power with a mandate for change in a victory largely produced by the votes of the alienated middle classes, women who yearn for freedom and normality, and young people seeking a more modern lifestyle and a less repressive cultural environment. Mr Khatami won the ballot on a programme that acknowledged the need for "pluralism and variety of views". In Iran, those words are not easily said.

The new president has a difficult balancing act ahead. He has to appease a conservative parliament led by his defeated election rival, who is also the parliamentary speaker. He must operate in the shadow of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the nation's supreme spiritual leader and successor to Ayatollah Khomeini. Much of Iran's external operations, including support for Hizbullah groups in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, are controlled by the fundamentalist network, not by the president. The hardliners have been successful in arresting some leading liberals on the eve of Mr Khatami's accession. There is clearly a struggle ahead, but the very fact of contention between different views is encouraging.

Helping Mr Khatami to ease Iran forward — without giving ammunition to the hardliners — will be diplomatically delicate. But the West must make an effort to do so, and finding a formula to get the European Union ambassadors back to Tehran would be a start. Half of all Iranians still live in poverty, in a country that is the world's third largest oil exporter. Iran's reform forces need discreet encouragement: the story of the revolution is far from over.

India is still defined by its democracy

Martin Woollacott

INDIAN preparations for the 50th anniversary of independence on August 15 are so incomplete that many of the celebrations will take place long after the date of liberation. The postponement reflects a degree of indifference, as well as the fact that India has had four harassed administrations in the space of a year. It is a curious reverse reprise of the events of 1947, when there were arguments for postponing the handover, a delay which some maintain would have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Then the real thing was rushed at, while now there is dawdling over the commemoration.

The current government, the news magazine India Today commented, has been "behaving as if it had been ambushed by an unexpected happening", even though the anniversary has been lurking in the calendar for all these years. In 1947, there were also elements of ambush. Mountbatten's decision to get out fast set the sub-continent on a precipitate dash toward no one knew what. The British, and the Congress and Muslim League leadership, advanced into a defile from which all emerged battered and bloodied. As a result, the new states were founded on an enormous crime, which we now call ethnic cleansing.

Most of the leaders had no idea that their decisions would lead to a vast and cruel sacrifice of perhaps as many as a million people. Their naive, ignorant, incongruously blithe comments on how communal strife would cease once the British were gone are on record. They did not know their own people; they did not know themselves.

A half-century later, partition is still the sub-continent's demon. That is, partition broadly defined as the temptation to tip the balance against diversity, trying, whether in city, region, or in the whole society, to impose or create a majority regime. That temptation broke Pakistan and bent India. In India, Nehru tried to maintain, there ought to be no majority and no minorities. Mere number cannot carry the privileges or assumptions it does in the West. Yet partition is a pole toward which the region is constantly pulled.

One Indian minority, the British, did slip away in 1947. Some historians have commented that it was Britain, not India, which won its freedom at midnight. J K Galbraith, when he was the United States ambassador to India, was one of the first to puncture the argument that Britain had behaved with exceptional wisdom. The British got out because India, which had been an asset, was well on the way to becoming an economic, military, and political liability. British people would not have accepted the costs of staying on, even for a few more years.

Whether or not Britain failed in its responsibility in the practical sense that, had it done things differently, India might have been saved from partition or partition's price in human lives might have been lower, is an argument that will continue. But what is true is that it left India without much examination of its conscience.

It is easy to say that this jubilee comes without much jubilation because south Asian countries are looking at more disappointment than achievement. The western rump of Pakistan is a corrupt, violent state, though shakily democratic. Bangladesh has had a new political start, but very late in the day, and after years of wasteful and sometimes bloody internal conflict. India long ago lost the balance that Nehru gave it, his daughter playing her part in the abandonment of principles that he believed vital. The decline of the Congress party has opened the door to regional, communal and religious nationalist parties. They have in common narrower constituencies, narrowed horizons and a tendency to exclude. On the economic front, the failures of India's past development policies are clear, but the advantages of the liberalisation of the past few years uncertain.

But the achievement is real, all the same. Sunil Khilnani, the author of a concise and clever new book called The Idea Of India, emphasises that the notion that there was a country called India which passed from British control to India and Pakistan is simplistic. India had to be invented after independence. It emerged, he suggests, as a society where democracy was not just a choice but a necessity. Around a powerful and activist state that had much in its gift circled a galaxy of regions, ethnicities, religions, castes, and classes held in orbit by the hope of advantage. The tractor beams of this system were energised by a calculating democracy increasingly dominated by elections.

THE disadvantage has been that politicians desperate for office promise more than they can deliver and are punished ever more severely when voting time comes. That makes, first, for corruption, in the search for campaign funding. Second, it brings in the last resort of communal appeal, which seems a better means of gaining and keeping office than material promises that are hard to keep. As Khilnani writes: "It was the secular, modernist Indian élite who dragged this language of religious affiliation into the arena of national politics."

Yet political development was not a matter of careful and deliberate choice. Society changed in volatile and surprising ways. Democracy changed, coarsened, and the system changed with it. Indian democracy survives and is even vigorous, but always with the danger that "the operative principles of the few large-scale formations of India's past" where there had been "relatively limited interference in the society's religious practices" may be breached.

The destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya was one such moment. The idea of building a temple to Ram in that spot was part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's project of creating "one nation, one people, one culture". The point that Khilnani makes is not so much that such a project is wrong, although it is, but that it is unworkable. If you take the politics out of India, "the most intensely political society in the world", India will cease to be India.

The idea that India is democracy is not a bad one and, in spite of everything, it is a surprisingly optimistic thing to be able to say after 50 difficult years.

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Haiti leaders squabble over new PM

Jean-Michel Caroit
in Santo Domingo

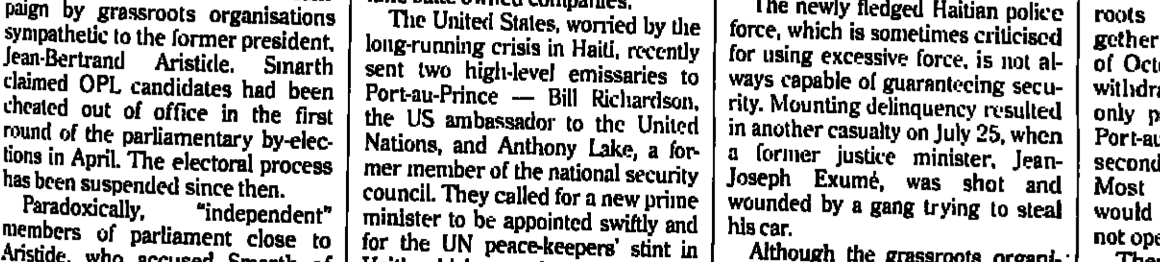
ON JULY 28, the Haitian president, René Préval, appointed Eric Pierre as prime minister to succeed Rosny Smarth, who resigned on June 9. Pierre, aged 53, is a senior official with the Inter-American Development Bank and has no political affiliations.

According to Haiti's 1987 constitution, the choice of prime minister is a prerogative of the president, but has to be ratified by a vote of confidence in both houses of parliament. The Lavalas movement (OPL), Haiti's main parliamentary party, is in no mood to rubberstamp Préval's decision.

Gérard Pierre-Charles, the OPL's co-ordinator, said: "We might accept Pierre, but that would depend on negotiations . . . on the still pending electoral dispute and on the composition of the government." Pierre-Charles, who claims to have a majority in the Senate and 33 out of 81 members of parliament, expects a long ratification process and does not rule the OPL putting forward its own candidate for the post.

Smarth, who is on the OPL executive, resigned after allegedly being subjected to a destabilisation campaign by grassroots organisations sympathetic to the former president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Smarth claimed OPL candidates had been cheated out of office in the first round of the parliamentary by-elections in April. The electoral process has been suspended since then.

Paradoxically, "independent" members of parliament close to Aristide, who accused Smarth of trying to implement "a neo-liberal plan dictated by foreign powers and financial organisations", would be prepared to vote for Pierre, even though he represents such organisations and is thought to be a firm believer in privatisation.



Riot police patrol the streets of Port-au-Prince last week during a general strike called by grassroots organisations against the continued presence of UN troops PHOTOGRAPH: DANIEL MOREL

The release of several hundred million dollars of international aid depends on the implementation of an economic modernisation plan that will result in the privatisation of nine state-owned companies.

The United States, worried by the long-running crisis in Haiti, recently sent two high-level emissaries to Port-au-Prince — Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations, and Anthony Lake, a former member of the national security council. They called for a new prime minister to be appointed swiftly and for the UN peace-keepers' stint in Haiti, which was due to expire on July 31, to be extended.

Richardson and Lake also visited Aristide at his residence in Tabarre, thus recognising the influence the former president continues to exert on Haitian affairs.

Last week, the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, recommended that the Security Council extend by four months the presence of a "transitional mission" with reduced personnel in Haiti.

The newly fledged Haitian police force, which is sometimes criticised for using excessive force, is not always capable of guaranteeing security. Mounting delinquency resulted in another casualty on July 25, when a former justice minister, Jean-Joseph Exumé, was shot and wounded by a gang trying to steal his car.

Although the grassroots organisations sympathetic to Aristide have been organising demonstrations to protest against the "foreign occupation" and have demanded the withdrawal of the UN contingent of about 1,300 Canadian and Pakistani troops, Richardson publicly stated that the former president had come out in favour of keeping the Blue Helmets in Haiti. There was no word from Aristide.

The call for a general strike — issued on July 28 by several grassroots organisations grouped together as the Patriotic Association of October 31 — to press for the withdrawal of foreign troops was only partly heeded in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and in the country's second-largest city, Cap-Haïtien. Most shopkeepers feared there would be violent incidents and did not open their stores.

There were almost no *tap-taps* — vans that provide public transport — on the streets during the morning, but by afternoon their numbers had increased. The police's rapid intervention force stepped in to disperse the demonstrators, who were blocking traffic with burning tyres.

(July 30)

Russian moguls battle over privatisation

Jean-Baptiste Naudet
in Moscow

THE sale of Svyazinvest, the Russian telecommunications giant, may have been described as an "example of honest privatisation" by the youthful Boris Nemtsov, one of Russia's two first deputy prime ministers. But it has triggered a political crisis and a free-for-all between powerful financiers, who have been trading accusations of "gangsterism" via the various media they control.

If Nemtsov is to be believed, "even if everything seems calm on the surface, the situation is very dangerous". The "honest reforms" he has promised are, he claims, threatened by "poor losers".

These "losers" have launched a strong attack on the company that made the most out of the sale, Uneximbank, Russia's biggest financial group, and on Nemtsov himself.

On July 29, Nemtsov went on the counterattack in the pages of a daily newspaper in which Uneximbank has shares. "Certain news and financial groups could well combine their interests with those of communist and fascist groups," he wrote. "They do not need honest rules or democratic capitalism; they want a capitalism of thieves."

Nemtsov even fingered the "poor losers": they were "the owners of the big television companies NTV and Ort", who "wanted to obtain a quarter of all Russian telecommunications".

The private television company NTV belongs to Vladimir Gusinsky's powerful group Most, while Ort, the leading state television channel, is controlled by multi-millionaire Boris Berezovsky, who is deputy secretary of the country's security council.

They have denied putting in bids for Svyazinvest. But the first deputy prime minister, Anatoly Chubais, says he has met the two men to discuss the sale of the company.

The affair has taken on a political dimension. The prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is regarded as an enemy of Nemtsov, flew to the rescue of the "losers" on July 29, and demanded that his government should provide "clarifications" about the Svyazinvest privatisation.

When it was announced that the consortium controlled by Uneximbank had won the day, media controlled by Gusinsky's and Berezovsky's two competing groups launched a series of attacks on Uneximbank and its chairman, Vladimir Potanin.

The daily Sevodnya — which belongs to the Most group — sharply criticised the privatisation auction. Then the Ort channel, controlled by Berezovsky, "exposed" Uneximbank, claiming that the bank had misappropriated several millions of dollars in the course of earlier privatisations.

The NTV channel lambasted Nemtsov's policies and even his "bad taste". Berezovsky's daily Nezavisimaya Gazeta published an article headlined: "Is Mr Potanin going to become president of Russia?" and described his rise and his appetite for buying up media "so as to avoid negative publicity".

Andrei Pyontovsky, a political analyst quoted in the daily Moscow Times, thought that Uneximbank was preparing a counterattack that was going to destroy the Berezovsky camp, but that it could all end with the mutual destruction of both parties.

Yet the sale of 25 per cent of the shares of Svyazinvest for $1.9 billion — the biggest business transaction in Russian history — had been hailed by analysts of the Russian market as one of the first cases of honest bidding to have taken place in Russia.

The winning consortium's bid of $1.9 billion was 60 per cent higher than the opening price, whereas earlier sales had gone through at the bottom price after competing bidders had been eliminated on various bureaucratic pretexts.

This time the losers accused the government of having favoured Uneximbank (which bid in partnership with Deutsche Bank and the financier George Soros), but were unable to come up with evidence to back their allegations.

The battle between Potanin and Berezovsky, which has now erupted in public, goes back a long way. The Moscow public prosecutor's office recently announced it was to investigate Potanin following the disappearance of $237 million of budgetary funds, which went through his bank. So far nothing has come of the inquiries.

Some analysts see this scandal as arising from Berezovsky's attempt to curb the ambitions of Potanin, who earlier tried to wrest control of the oil company Sibneft from him.

(July 31)

Scientologists win partial court victory

EDITORIAL

ON JULY 28, an appeal court in Lyon reduced the sentences of six members of the Scientology movement charged with responsibility for the suicide of one of their followers. The court also ruled that the "Church of Scientology" was entitled to call itself a religion. In so doing, the appeal court gave the movement created by the science-fiction writer Lafayette Ron Hubbard in 1954 a seal of approval it probably did not expect.

The court justified its decision by invoking an "absolute" freedom of worship — anchored in the French tradition of freedom of thought. It thus confirmed a position that the French courts had already adopted in 1980.

It is not the job of either the state or the judiciary to become involved in the debate over whether Scientology is a religion or a cult. For almost a century now, France has enjoyed perfectly adequate legislation in the form of the 1905 law separating church and state, which specifies that "the republic does not recognise, remunerate or subsidise any form of worship". The key question is whether the religious association concerned respects the law and the freedom of the individual.

Although the court of appeal has recognised the existence of a Scientology "community" and of its followers' "shared faith", the "victory" should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the leaders of the movement in Lyon have been sentenced for fraud and manslaughter.

In its ruling, the appeal court noted that Scientology, as practised in Lyon, was an enterprise whose sole aim was the improper solicitation of believers' money. It remarked that in certain cases the techniques used by Scientology resulted in "a veritable manipulation of the mind".

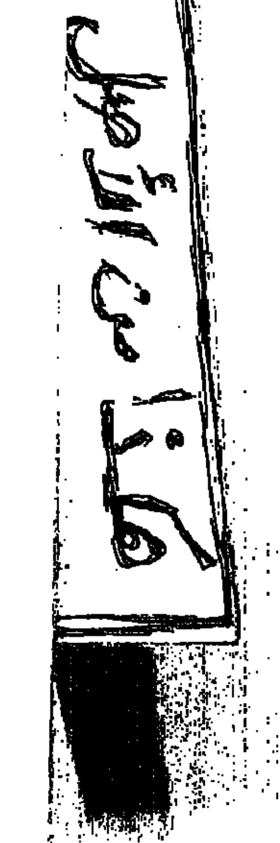
The anti-cult activists who have exposed the shocking methods of indoctrination, harassment and blackmail used by Scientologists will feel that the court of appeal has been too lenient. But the magistrates felt it was not their business to assess the general doctrine of the Church of Scientology.

The decision will probably revive the debate about how to deal with cults. When it handed in its report in January last year, the parliamentary commission of inquiry into cults, which classified the Church of Scientology as a cult, felt it was "neither useful nor opportune" to draw up anti-cult legislation and that France's existing laws provided the necessary guarantees.

The Lyon magistrates, on the other hand, pointed out that the job of the law was to judge acts alone and not social phenomena.

The day after the magistrates' decision, the public prosecutor's office referred the case to the supreme court of appeal.

(July 30)



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 10 1997

Gardens of delight

Emmanuel de Roux

THIRTY little 250-square metre gardens are currently on show at the sixth Festival International des Jardins at Chaumont-sur-Loire, 17km from Blois. Each is surrounded by a beech hedge and devoted, with varying degrees of success, to a different theme.

Water, drought and fountains are key themes this year. Vegetables, whether by accident or design, feature in the composition of many gardens, and the dominant colour is blue.

There is a marshy garden with a kitchen garden floating on it, which its creator, Flavia Nasio, has organised like a theatre. Water droplets, both natural and artificial, glisten on the leaves of plants in "Barbibulle", a shaded plot of land straight out of a fairy-tale, designed by students at the Conservatoire du Paysage (Landscape Conservatory) in Blois. Another college, the Ecole Méditerranéenne du Paysage, has reproduced a terraced and flooded paddy field.

There are gimmicky gardens, too, some of them amusing, others irritating. La Fuite d'Eau (The Leak), by Macha Makeieff, a leading member of the Deschiens troupe of comedians, consists of a caravan stuck in muddy ground amid heaps of scrap iron. The garden is located "inside" the vehicle, which is overgrown with a riot of suburban vegetation fed by a leaking pipe. Real-life "working-class" gardens are usually more inspired than this.

The wall of water devised by Jean-Pierre Delattre is clever, but looks a little too much like a shower curtain. Franck Herscher's pipes wave about in a frenzied and aleatory fashion, spraying visitors who venture into the middle of his garden, which is dotted with strange phallic vegetables.

Thomas Boog and Patrick Bailly's kitsch construction of seashells takes the form of a wave frozen in time. It is surrounded by a haze of cosmos, dill, fennel and verbena. Jean Grelier and Mark Marder's hydraulic organ, which is activated by a huge paddle-wheel driven by a waterfall, is reminiscent of the norias used in the Middle East.

Visually successful gardens include a straw impluvium by Laure Bourdial, Joël Chatain, Laurent Monestier and Marianne Souq — an upside-down cone in the shape of a question mark erected in the middle of a square patch of rye.

Even better is a garden designed by the Japanese artist, Fumiaki Takano, in which the running waters of a stream flow in the form of a spiral amid carefully positioned rocks. It is very likely this work will still be in place next year. The same is true of a sand archipelago by another Japanese designer, Shodo Suzuki.

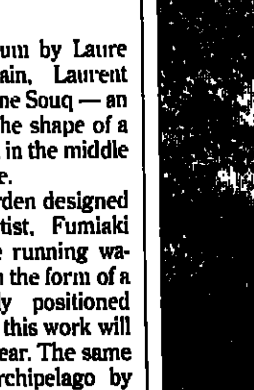
Patrick Blanc and Michel Mangematin's extraordinary wall of plants has survived from last year. The maze of willows woven by Judith and David Drew is now wreathed in mist. And the soft greenhouse designed by Edouard François and Duncan Lewis, which last year looked like a badly finished piece of DIY, now seems thoroughly at home in its jungle of bamboo. Apparently the festival organisers are finding it hard to part with past successes.

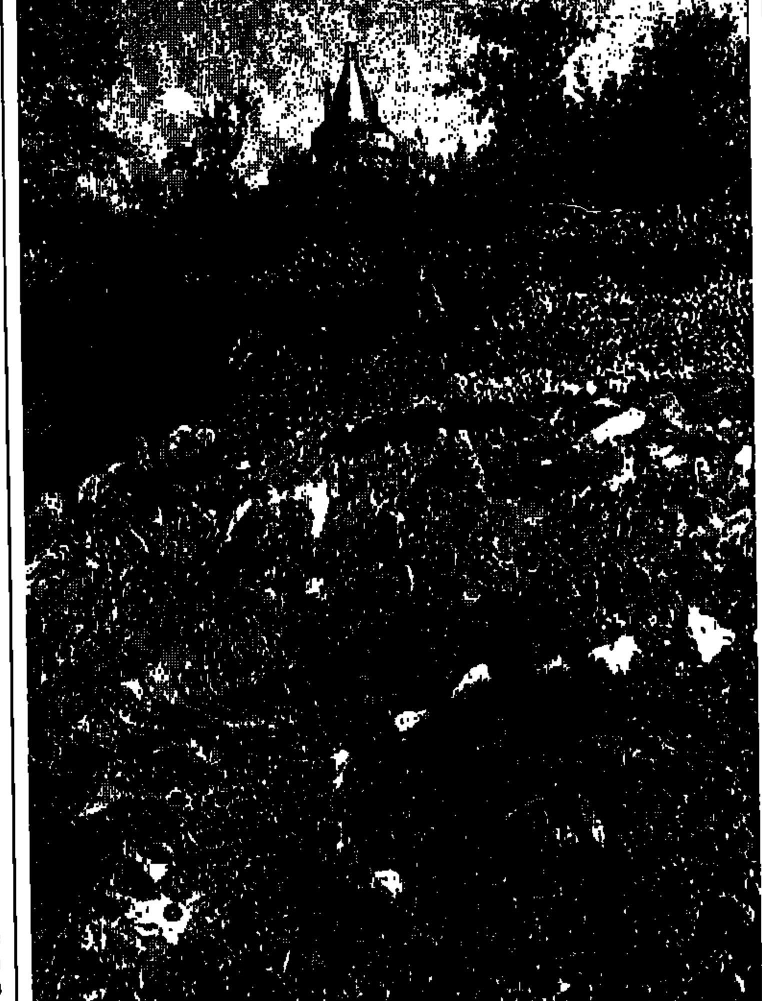
This creates a problem. Chaumont is the showcase of the Conservatoire International des Parcs et Jardins et du Paysage. It therefore offers us ephemeral "products". These go against the spirit of the garden, which hinges essentially on the notion of time — which changes a garden's appearance. The most successful creations naturally improve from year to year.

The hint of a solution is perhaps being spontaneously generated within Chaumont's park. Its layout was designed by the Belgian landscape gardener Jacques Wirtz. He had the idea of criss-crossing its space with a network of hedges. Thanks to this simple system, each garden is isolated, yet forms part of a whole: it is thus shown to best effect.

Yet, as the years go by, Chaumont's park is taking on a density and a colour of its own. Additional flowerbeds have sprung up. Each mini-ensemble is linked to its neighbour by a combination of rose bushes and grasses. A leafy ravine directly in line with the château's white outline is overlooked by swathes of hemerocallis, and yellow and day lilies.

In the near future, perhaps, the park will paradoxically achieve a unity that is independent of its ephemeral little plots. Side by side with the festival, Chaumont will exist as a garden in its own right.





Rock solid . . . Fumiaki Takano's From Sky To Earth

Sixty kilometres further down the Loire are the celebrated gardens of the Château de Villandry. They are interesting to visit after attending a festival that deliberately sets out to be modern and ephemeral: the Villandry gardens seem impervious to the passage of time.

With their three terraces on different levels and a geometrical arrangement of clipped box hedges, they seem to be quintessentially Renaissance in style. Yet the connection between Chaumont and Villandry is closer than it might seem at first sight, probably because they were both created in the 20th century.

The Villandry gardens were designed from 1906 on by Dr Joachim Carvallo, a biologist of Spanish origin who had just bought the château. He decided to refashion its existing landscape garden and had it completely replanted along the lines of monastery gardens and those depicted in the engravings of Androuet du Cerceau, a famous Renaissance architect.

With its combination of pseudo-historical quotation, a fondness for fragmented composition, and its choice of certain plants — eg, vegetables in the lower garden — the Villandry gardens are in fact very much a 20th century creation.

The Sixth Festival International des Jardins, Chaumont-sur-Loire. Until October 19. The Jardins du Château de Villandry are open all year

(July 2)

Libya decides to lend an ear to the West

Joëlle Stoltz in Tripoli

"MUSIC is a language that speaks spontaneously to all men's hearts. For in the end we are all the same, whatever our race or religion." Visibly moved and majestically draped in a thick white Bedouin's robe — but with a mobile phone to hand, like any self-respecting Libyan VIP — the composer Hassan Aribi recently welcomed the four members of the Viennese Concilium Musicum quartet — who specialise in classical Western music — to his school of Arab-Andalusian *maluf* music in Tripoli.

It was an unusual meeting. For 25 years Libya has discouraged all contact with cultures that have been equated with "imperialism" or "moral pollution". It is rumoured that Colonel Muammar Gadafy once publicly destroyed Western musical instruments to show his disapproval.

The United Nations embargo on flights to Libya has hardly improved the situation, and few musicians, either European or Arab, have ventured into the country in recent years. Meanwhile Arab- and English-speaking TV programmes cater to the desires of Libyan youth by beaming in a deluge of pop music via the satellite dishes that adorn every roof.

Tripoli's Cultural Centre, the only Western institute still operating in Libya, was responsible for re-establishing links. Once the problem of finding a large concert hall had been solved (the authorities gave their permission only at the last moment), the concert went ahead.

It attracted a large Libyan audience, was covered by national television and was attended by Tripoli's mayor, ex-colonel Ashur Migeg.

Professor Paul Angerer, founder of the Concilium Musicum, was surprised: "This is the first time we've had so many 'locals' in the audience for one of our concerts in the Arab world." The audience was delighted to see that the Xeremia Trio from Lyon, who specialise in medieval music and who shared the concert platform with the Viennese quartet, used instruments familiar to them from Arab tradition: the lute *(ud)*, the rebec *(rbab)* and a goblet-shaped drum called the *derbuka*.

Xeremia's founder, Robert Ressicaud, gave pride of place, both in the trio's concerts and in a lecture he gave on musical influences in the Mediterranean basin, to the Cantigas de Santa Maria compiled in the mid-13th century by King Alfonso X "the Wise" of Castile. The king liked to bring together at his court artists and scholars from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim cultures that then co-existed in Spain.

Later this year, a special Austrian radio programme will enable listeners to become acquainted with the quarter tone commas used in Oriental music. And the members of the Concilium Musicum have promised to send a cello bow to Libya, where such accessories are unobtainable.

(July 19)

Pavarotti admits to not knowing the score

Alain Lompech

"IT'S true I'm not a musician. I don't go very deep. The score is one thing, singing is another. What you have to do is have the music in your head and sing it with your body. Otherwise it's just a question of singing tonic sol-fa. I'm not a musician like Placido Domingo, who can even conduct an orchestra."

This confession by Luciano Pavarotti in the July 22 issue of Le Figaro was diplomatically played down by the interviewer, who pointed out that the famous tenor's apparent "ignorance" of musical notation should be seen in perspective.

Pavarotti is a modest man. When he got booed at La Scala after the premiere of a production of Verdi's Don Carlos in December 1992, he was the first to admit he had sung badly and deserved the reception he got. Such honesty is uncommon in the profession.

Orchestral players who sight-read their scores at concerts or recording sessions become angry rather than shamefaced when audiences and critics realise what they are up to. Pavarotti apparently thinks he is no musician because he cannot read music and trusts only his ear. It is not something he should feel hung-up about.

What does reading music mean? Two conductors at the peak of their profession, Lorin Maazel and Pierre Boulez, certainly do not know how to read some schematically notated early-music scores, let alone decipher the neumes of Gregorian chant. Similarly, William Christie or Philippe Herreweghe would be flummoxed by certain contemporary works, which on the page look more like a modern painting than a musical score.

A singer with such a perfect ear as Pavarotti would need only a few days to fill in the gaps in his musical training. All he in fact confessed to in the interview was an inability to read a full orchestral score or give harmony lessons.

There are dozens of soloists in every discipline, and indeed a few conductors, who are no better than Pavarotti at hearing in their heads the sound of a score they are reading. He may not be aware that many famous conductors who have accompanied him in the course of his career are completely out of their depth when having to conduct a new score.

Serge Koussevitsky, the highly respected boss of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, was forced, like Pavarotti, to call on the services of a pianist to learn certain works. His successor, Charles Munch, often did the same; and despite repeated efforts, he never managed to learn Stravinsky's Le Sacre de Printemps.

Arturo Toscanini was incapable of beating the quintuple time signature of the Danse Générale in Ravel's Daphnis et Chloé. Oscar Fried used a piano reduction when conducting Mahler's symphonies.

Is Pavarotti aware that certain conductors allow themselves to be conducted by the orchestra they are themselves supposed to be conducting? Or that orchestral players sometimes avoid looking at the baton of certain conductors for fear they will be led astray?

As the conductor and composer, Otto Klemperer, once quipped, the two easiest jobs in music are conductor and music critic.

(July 27-28)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 10 1997

The Washington Post

Netanyahu, Arafat Clash After Bombing

Barton Gellman in Jerusalem

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat maneuvered last weekend for leverage and moral high ground in the aftermath of last week's bombing in the Jerusalem central produce market.

In contrast to previous crises in the four-year Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, the two sides showed next to no sign of a collaborative response. Fueled by political weakness and mutual presumptions of treachery, Arafat and Netanyahu each looked elsewhere for allies and Israel squeezed Palestinian pressure points it has left untouched before.

It became clear last Saturday that Netanyahu had made good on his threat to stop payment of taxes and customs fees owed by Israel to the Palestinian Authority, leaving Arafat with no apparent means to meet the $40 million payroll now due to roughly 80,000 civil servants and police. The monthly transfer of funds collected by Israel on Palestinian goods and labor, an obligation that accounts for slightly over half the Palestinian budget, should have sent $25 million to the Palestinians last week.

Israel has not yet followed through on threats to jam Palestinian broadcasts and dispatch special forces into Palestinian-ruled cities, but soldiers and border police maintained a closure of West Bank towns and villages, in some places sealing their entrances with piles of four-foot concrete blocks.

In a further blow to the Palestinian economy, Israeli warships set a naval blockade in close view of the coastline of the self-ruled Gaza Strip, preventing fisherman from putting to sea.

Arafat, having summoned American, Russian and European envoys to seek their help in blunting the Israeli sanctions, flew to Alexandria to enlist Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Upon his return to Gaza, Arafat denounced "the collective punishment that the Israeli government has imposed on the Palestinian people and Palestinian Authority."

The crux of the dispute between Arafat and Netanyahu, touched off by the grisly dual suicide attack, was each man's accusation that the other is behaving like an enemy. Netanyahu kept up a punishing pace of interviews with foreign news agencies and television networks.

The prime minister's premise, made more explicit by aides, is that Arafat has manipulated the use of terror against Israel by giving freedom of action to Islamic extremists. His conclusion, in word and deed, has been that Israel will no longer merely make demands but will apply coercion against Arafat.

Arafat's argument is that Netanyahu is willfully failing to distinguish between his negotiating partners and the Islamic extremists whose violence aims to destroy the negotiations themselves. Last weekend he gave his endorsement to a claim advanced for some time by less senior Palestinian leaders: that Netanyahu is seizing opportunities to undermine a diplomatic process he never supported.

Independent assessment of the central factual dispute — whether Arafat has winked at the use of violence against Israel — is difficult.

Israel is basing much of its public case on accusations that Arafat's Gaza-based chief of police, Brig. Gen. Ghazi Jabali, helped organize a squad of policemen to engage in shooting attacks against Israeli settlers on the West Bank. This charge, for which Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai say Israel has hard evidence, is the basis for an extraordinary Israeli arrest warrant for Jabali issued last week.

Israeli officials have declined to say what exactly Jabali did or how they know it. Nor have they provided evidence, as they have in such cases before, to the Clinton administration, according to a U.S. official who would be privy to it.

"They claim to have audiotapes of conversations he had," the official said. "We have not been given any audiotape. Whether [Jabali] was directing attacks against Israeli civilians is a tough conclusion to draw. We don't have independent evidence to confirm or deny it."

A woman wounded in the blast in Jerusalem's central market last week is helped away. The bombs killed 15 people PHOTO: EYAL WARSHAVSKY

Israeli and Palestinian analysts largely agree, on the other hand, that Arafat has never been willing to meet the Israeli demand for an all-out war against Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the Islamic organizations presumed responsible for the twin bombings.

Hamas encompasses not only a self-styled "military wing" but a broadly based social and political movement that Arafat is loathe to part with decisively. Some 11 percent of Palestinians identified with Hamas in a poll last month by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center.

A senior Israeli security official, politically independent of the government, said Arafat has long "had a policy of containing Hamas and Islamic Jihad and making them a part of his camp."

"Whenever he knows of any specific case of an attack that is planned by Hamas or Islamic Jihad, he's going to do his best in order to foil it," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But he knows, and we know also, that you cannot know about every single attack."

Previous Israeli governments, faced with roughly the same picture, made public and private demands of Arafat and even angrily berated him for not doing enough.

Netanyahu, however, has gone several steps further. He appears on the brink of returning to campaign rhetoric in which he stated many times that there was no difference between Arafat, Hamas and terror.

U.S. Ends Ban on Latin Arms Sales

Thomas W. Lippman

REVERSING MORE than two decades of U.S. policy, President Clinton last week authorized U.S. defense contractors to sell combat jets and other advanced military equipment to South American countries.

The long-expected announcement follows an intense — and sometimes heated — administration review of a policy adopted when the continent's major countries were under military rule.

Now that generals have been replaced by democratically elected governments, the Clinton administration has been under intense pressure from defense and aerospace contractors to let them compete for sales as South American countries update military armaments.

The announcement reflects an assessment by Washington that the shift to democratic rule and civilian control of the armed forces in South America is permanent, senior officials said.

Long-standing territorial arguments that might have led to armed conflict in the past have been settled, officials said, and there is no reason to believe South American countries wish to do more than carry out long-overdue upgrading of their armed forces.

"We believe the governments in Latin America represent a new modern, democratic Latin America," said Thomas F. McLarty, Clinton's senior emissary to the region. "It's a sea change, a major shift. This is a lifting of the ban but we think they'll act responsibly."

The likely first beneficiary of the new policy is Lockheed-Martin Corp., which wants to sell F-16 fighters to Chile. Until last week, Lockheed-Martin was barred from giving the Chileans the technical and financial data required to qualify as a bidder for the contract.

Industry executives have complained that the arms sales ban prevented them from developing the business relationships they need to win South American contracts for nonmilitary equipment such as air traffic control systems and communications satellites.

Opponents of changing the policy argued that South America's transition to democracy is not yet secure and the United States should not encourage an arms race that would divert funds from economic development.

They often cited the fact that Chile's former dictator, Gen. Augusto Pinochet, is still commander of the Chilean armed forces. However, senior U.S. officials said his term ends in March and he is expected to retire long before any warplanes could be delivered.

Nevertheless, the shift provoked criticism from some Democrats. "I find it hard to believe that selling sophisticated aircraft, such as F-16s, helps to maintain regional security and stability," Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Connecticut, said in a statement.

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Delaware, the senior Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed "disappointment" with the decision. And Rep. Nita M. Lowey, D-New York, who has introduced a bill to make the sales ban permanent, said, "This administration must not allow McDonnell-Douglas and Lockheed-Martin to dictate our foreign policy."

More Than One Set of Asian Values

EDITORIAL

SECRETARY OF State Madeleine Albright clashed last week on the subject of human rights with some of her counterparts from Malaysia, China and other Asian nations. They objected to supposed American arrogance in pushing them to allow their people to live, think, express themselves and worship in freedom. Those are not universal values, the Asians argued, but Western ones, no more entitled to international protection than "Asian values" such as consensus, economic growth and stability.

What baloney! When we think of Asian values, we don't think of Singapore's government banning publications it doesn't like and suing opposition politicians. We tend to think, rather, of the multitudes of Filipinos who rose up in 1986 to sweep away the Marcos dictatorship and install a "people-power" democracy led by Corazon Aquino. We think of the South Korean students and shopkeepers, professors and auto workers, who braved tear gas and worse in 1987 to set their nation on a democratic path. We think of the millions of Chinese who risked their lives at Tiananmen Square in Beijing and in other cities across their nation in 1989 in search of greater liberty.

Throughout Asia, in fact — from Taiwan to Hong Kong to Cambodia to the world's most populous democracy of India — whenever people have been given a chance, and often when they have had to seize it, they have opted for freedom.

Yes, Americans and the American government can be arrogant; and yes, U.S. society is far from perfect. China's annual "human rights report" on the United States, an angry response to the U.S. review of Chinese practices, cites many real and shameful problems, including abysmal prison conditions and terrible pockets of poverty. One striking difference in the two reports, though, is that the problems cited by China are well known to, and oft debated by, Americans; China's report relies almost entirely on U.S. newspapers for its information. Chinese leaders do not allow comparable debate or reporting.

Do some societies value consensus and stability more than others? Of course. Japan, for example, has shaped a social and economic system that celebrates group harmony more than America's, and individual freedom less. But Japan is an Asian democracy; its people have freely chosen and shaped their system, and they may change it if they choose. It's striking that unelected rulers in China and Indonesia aren't willing to subject their understanding of Asian values to a similar test. Mrs. Albright is right to speak out.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
August 10 1997

New Iranian Leader 'Still Hostile to U.S.'

Thomas W. Lippman

MOHAMMED KHATEMI, who became president of Iran last Sunday, can have a new and more cooperative relationship with the United States if he wants one, but so far there are no signs he does, according to senior Clinton administration officials.

Since Khatemi's election on May 23, President Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and their senior aides have said they would welcome a break in the long-standing hostility between Tehran and Washington but it can come about only if Iran's behavior changes.

Iranian voters handed Khatemi a surprising landslide victory over a rival backed by hard-line leaders of the religious establishment because he campaigned as a moderate on domestic social issues. So far, U.S. officials said, nothing in Khatemi's record, and nothing he said in his campaign or after his victory, has indicated he is inclined to turn Iran away from what Washington sees as a record of support for terrorism, opposition to peace with Israel and assassination of political opponents.

Absent concrete evidence that Iran is prepared to respond to those concerns, there is no prospect of a change in U.S. policy, which calls for the maximum international effort to isolate Iran and contain its ambitions in the Persian Gulf and central Asia, officials said.

"The choice doesn't lie with us. The Iranians know what they have to do," a senior official said. That echoes long-standing Clinton administration policy, which states that Washington would welcome a more positive relationship with Iran but the path to such a development begins in Tehran.

There is growing sentiment among academic specialists and Middle East policy analysts for a more conciliatory approach. In Congress and among Jewish groups, however, antipathy to Iran runs deep, and any unilateral overture from the Clinton administration would attract strong opposition.

The disclosure last week that the administration has decided not to oppose construction across Iran of a pipeline that would carry natural gas from Turkmenistan to Turkey touched off speculation about such a shift, but Albright and other senior officials denied that the decision signaled any reaching out to Iran.

The pipeline decision "sends exactly the wrong message at the wrong time," Sens. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-New York, and Sam Brownback, R-Kansas, wrote Albright. "This sends a message of weakness to Iran, and undermines the administration's arguments" in attempts to persuade European allies to join the unilateral U.S. economic embargo on Iran. European Union countries have resisted U.S. efforts to enlist them in the campaign.

D'Amato was principal sponsor of a law imposing sanctions on any foreign company that invests $40 million or more over a 12-month period in Iran's oil and gas industry, the country's economic lifeline. U.S. officials said the proposed pipeline is probably not covered by that law because Iran would pay for the trans-Iran part of the line, but insisted that is a legal analysis, not a policy decision.

A month earlier, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, representing 52 groups across the spectrum of U.S. Jewish opinion, wrote to Clinton urging him not to assume that Khatemi's election offers an opportunity for a rapprochement with Iran.

Khatemi won mostly on the basis of domestic social issues, on which he is regarded as more liberal than Iran's ruling religious council. Khatemi is hardly a political outsider in Iran. He was culture minister in a previous cabinet — in which capacity he reaffirmed the death sentence against British author Salman Rushdie — and was one of only four among 238 presidential aspirants authorized to run by the ruling religious council.

He has said nothing to distance himself from the anti-U.S. policies of the country's religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In his first post-election address to the nation on July 19, he said nothing about foreign policy.

Should it turn out that Khatemi does desire a thaw with the United States, senior officials said, the response at this end could be complicated by the investigation into the June 1996 bombing of a U.S. Air Force housing complex in Saudi Arabia, in which 19 Americans died.

If investigators find conclusive proof that Iran was behind that attack, Clinton would face strong pressure to retaliate — a development that analysts say would surely truncate any opening to Khatemi.



Iran's Islamic leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, centre, confirms Mohammad Khatemi, right, as the new president last Sunday as ex-president Hashemi Rafsanjani looks on PHOTOGRAPH: MOHAMMAD SAYYAD

Democrat Glee at GOP Roasting

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

HAVING A liberal Republican smeared, roasted on a Senate spit and chewed up by Jesse Helms may seem only fair play to some. For years Democrats and many leading, nonpartisan civil servants have had to endure the Helms confirmation treatment. Turnabout time?

If not fair play, you have to wonder what President Clinton had in mind in crossing party lines to nominate William F. Weld, who resigned last week as governor of Massachusetts, to be his ambassador to Mexico despite Helms' all too credible promise to block the Boston liberal from ever holding the job.

Irony is not this president's strong suit. Manipulating party politics is. He is as good as any national leader since Lyndon Johnson on this score. So Clinton may be out to win by losing: A fight between Weld and Helms over what the Republican Party truly stands for can only stir up and worsen the deep divisions that plague Clinton's opposition.

Helms, the North Carolina ultraconservative who is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stands 180 degrees apart from Weld on abortion, gay rights and most other social issues.

To justify his opposition to the Mexico appointment, Helms has sought to smear Weld as being soft on drugs, playing up Weld's support for limited legalization of marijuana to ease pain for the ill. The medical use of marijuana is a legitimate subject of debate, on which Helms and Weld would be expected to disagree. It is not a litmus test of patriotism or ability.

In fact, Weld's experience heading the Justice Department's Criminal Division between 1986 and 1988 gives him valuable insight into efforts to curb drug smuggling that would be useful in the embassy in Mexico City. It is perhaps his only obvious qualification for the job, in the view of some of those who know this restless, ambitious politician, who was bored with being governor.

Senate rules and the GOP leadership's disinclination to get involved in the nasty brawling that Helms relishes suggest that Weld will lose this fight. Helms has it within his power to deny any ambassadorial nominee a hearing and thus confirmation by his committee unless his colleagues overrule him.

By resigning, Weld has positioned himself to plunge immediately into presidential primary politics for the year 2000, polarizing the GOP race into a choice between the Helmsian old guard and the Weldian future. That prospect, a hair-raising one for other GOP candidates, should have Al Gore chuckling all the way to the Electoral College.

The fact of the matter seems to be that Clinton stumbled into the Weld-Helms fight trying to clear the way into the Massachusetts Statehouse for Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy II. Now that it is upon him, the president should not take comfort in a fight that would allow liberal Republicans to become even more of an endangered species.

Egypt's Islamic Militants Call for Truce

John Lancaster in Cairo

SIX YEARS after launching a violent campaign to topple the military-backed government of President Hosni Mubarak, Islamic militants in Egypt are gasping for breath, hounded by security forces, bereft of popular support and now, it seems, ready to raise a white flag.

Founders of the Islamic Group, Egypt's main militant organization, issued a statement last month calling on their followers to cease all military operations and refrain from inciting violence against the Egyptian government.

Given the splintered nature of the militant group, it is unclear whether members will respect the declaration by the six leaders, who are serving life terms for their part in the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. One important factor is whether the truce will be endorsed by the group's spiritual leader, Sheik Omar Abdul Rahman, who is serving a prison term in New York after being convicted on terrorism charges in connection with the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

Government spokesmen have dismissed the militants' declaration as a sign of weakness and a tactical maneuver aimed at winning breathing space to allow the organization to regroup. They say they will continue security operations aimed at eradicating the militants, who have largely been contained within several rural provinces in the Nile Valley south of Cairo.

Nevertheless, the militants' statement has been widely interpreted as a potential turning point in an armed conflict that has killed more than 1,000 people and raised fears abroad about the stability of an important ally of the West and a key mediator in the Middle East peace process. Among the dead have been police, Christians, secular intellectuals and foreign tourists, including 18 Greek visitors gunned down outside Cairo's Europa Hotel last April.

Montasser Zayat, a lawyer who is close to the group's leadership and functions as its spokesman here, said in a recent interview that the Islamic Group leaders decided to call for a truce after concluding they could no longer achieve their goal of creating an Islamic state through violence.

He said the declaration also reflects the group's desire to present a united front with the government in confronting Israel, its new respect for Mubarak's "nationalism" and a commitment to pursuing political ends by peaceful means.

"We're not working with the government; we're not apologizing to the government, but you could say it's a truce," Zayat said. "It's impossible to face Israel when our own side is divided."

The unilateral cease-fire was proclaimed by a defendant in the trial of 97 men and women charged in a series of terrorist incidents, including the 1994 killing of a police general and the placing of bombs outside Cairo banks and tourist offices. During a break in the trial at a military courtroom near Cairo, the defendant, Mohammed Amin Abdelalim, read the statement on behalf of the six jailed leaders, Karam Zohdi, Nageh Ibrahim, Aboud Zomr, Hamdi Abdel Rahman, Fuad Dawalabi and Ali Sherif.

"The unilateral truce is in the interest of Islam and Muslims," Abdelalim said. "I am sure the leaders will fulfill it."

A few days later in the same courtroom, Abdelalim announced that the cease-fire call had also been endorsed by two leaders of Islamic Jihad, the other main militant group that has been fighting Mubarak's government. Egypt's largest Islamic opposition group, the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, contends that it has never supported violence.

The declaration appears to have generated confusion within the organizations themselves. Exiled militant spokesmen in Europe have told Arabic-language newspapers that operations will continue in spite of the jailed leaders' plea.

Two weeks ago, for example, six policemen were killed when their vehicle was fired on by Islamic militants near Minya in the Upper Nile Valley.

"My impression is there is no clear view, and that suggests there isn't a very cohesive leadership," a Western diplomat said. "In terms of their overall activities, there doesn't seem to be any overarching strategy and no clear sense of what they're trying to achieve."

In the interview, Zayat acknowledged that he and his associates "are still trying to convince our leaders abroad" to back the truce. The group's leaders first began considering the possibility of a truce last year, according to Zayat, who said he traveled to London in March to discuss the issue with exiled strategists.

Zayat said the "most important" factor in the decision was their recognition that "the government has managed to beat them militarily." He said the truce represents an attempt to "save the rest of the leadership" and to secure the release of 35,000 imprisoned militants and their supporters. Human rights organizations estimate that number at 10,000 to 14,000.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Rebels Undermine Colombia's Oil Boom

Serge F. Kovaleski in Arauca

LEFTIST guerrillas have launched an unprecedented campaign of attacks on petroleum exploration and production sites in Colombia, wreaking havoc on foreign oil companies and disrupting production of the most vital export of its troubled economy.

Colombia's guerrilla groups have targeted the oil industry for more than a decade. But the recent wave of assaults — which include the ambushing of army troops protecting petroleum facilities, a sharp increase in pipeline bombings and the kidnapping and murder of oil workers — marks a firm shift in the insurgency's longstanding war against the state.

Since petroleum overtook coffee last year as Colombia's foremost legal export, guerrillas have focused on undermining the nation's oil boom, which has generated large revenues for the government, following some of the biggest reserve discoveries in the hemisphere. In 1996, oil exports brought in $1.6 billion. In targeting the international petroleum corporations working here in partnership with the state, the rebels have accused them of milking one of the nation's most precious resources for profit.

The military, weakened by budget cuts and demoralized by a string of other defeats by the guerrillas, has fallen short in protecting the petroleum installations from the rebels, who seem to attack at will. The problem has forced the oil corporations to pay millions of dollars directly to the army for increased protection, in addition to a dollar-a-barrel "war tax" they are already required to pay for army security. But according to oil company executives, there is little to show for the investment.

"There have been more incidents waged against us in the past nine months than in the previous 10 years," said Robert Stewart, spokesman for Occidental de Colombia Inc., a subsidiary of Occidental Petroleum Corp. of Bakersfield, California, which operates the Cano Limon pipeline near this town 300 miles northeast of Bogota. "We have never seen anything like this before."

The situation has become so severe for Occidental that some workers spend several weeks at a time living on the oil company's compound because the 40-mile drive to Arauca is so vulnerable to guerrilla attacks.

The latest spate of attacks has also exacerbated the environmental damage caused by guerrilla assaults. Bombings of the 480-mile Cano Limon pipeline from Arauca to the Caribbean coast over the last decade alone have spilled more than 1.5 million barrels of oil along the 75 miles of environmentally fragile wetlands it crosses. That amount, analysts noted, is more than six times greater than what was spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster of 1989.

The growing rebel ire against the oil industry was recently made clear in a communique that the National Liberation Army, the country's second largest guerrilla group, forced several radio stations to broadcast. The declaration said all workers and oil facilities operated by British Petroleum Exploration in the eastern department of Casanare were "military objectives" to be attacked by the rebels.

Soon after the broadcasts, six buses carrying workers and contractors in the area, considered to be the largest oil project in the Western Hemisphere, were stopped by guerrillas and torched. One employee was shot and killed as he tried to escape and several others were burned. British Petroleum had to suspend part of its operations because of guerrilla activity for the first time since it began working in Colombia 10 years ago. It idled a construction site for a month after the 1,300 employees assigned to it refused to come to work for fear they would be targeted by the guerrillas. British Petroleum estimates the shutdown cost it and its partners $20 million.



Burning issue . . . guerrilla attacks on pipelines have caused the spillage of millions of barrels of oil

The Cano Limon pipeline, the nation's largest, transports almost half of Colombia's oil exports. It has been a favorite target for guerrillas. So far this year, it has been attacked 41 times, compared with 45 times in the whole of 1996. It has been bombed 476 times since it began operation in 1985. Furthermore, in the three months before the ambushes, an additional 28 contract employees, security personnel, local police and military troops were killed by guerrillas at Occidental's production areas.

Observers noted that besides the difficulty of guarding a pipeline that runs for miles through dense, tropical growth, the army has failed to develop any organized intelligence on the rebels or a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy.

The guerrillas, emboldened by the weakness of President Ernesto Samper and recent victories against the army and government, continue to gain strength, while rebel movements in the rest of Latin America have been declining. Throughout much of this Andean nation's countryside, insurgents compete with the government, and may even be more powerful than it.

Observers also attributed the stepped-up oil violence to the government's efforts to negotiate a peace accord with the insurgency. "Historically in Colombia, each time the government makes announcements that it's trying to negotiate with the guerrillas, there has been an increase in terrorist actions, with the obvious purpose of obtaining a position of strength," said Carlos Conte, acting minister of mining and energy.

Furthermore, guerrilla violence typically precedes elections, which are upcoming for mayoral and gubernatorial posts. The rebels stage attacks to assert their strength and frighten people into not voting or backing the rebels' candidates.

Oil officials said they believe that some oil workers are providing guerrillas with information about the installations — either because the insurgents threaten them or because they are rebel sympathizers. Early this year, Colombian authorities arrested a dozen members of the state oil workers' union for allegedly supplying guerrillas with security details about the pipeline.

For the oil companies, the arrests confirmed one of their worst fears. Company officials said a major source of frustration is that revenues from the "war tax" have been spent on a variety of other projects not related to oil security, following a government determination that the constitution requires it to place any taxes it collects into a general fund.

There has been talk among the oil companies of seeking to have the war tax scrapped, and the corporations hint at the possibility of paying for private security.

One paradox is that some guerrillas profit from the tens of millions of dollars in royalties that the oil companies pay to local communities.

Many of the towns are run by rebels who decide how the money is distributed. Officials said the guerrillas know that the oil corporations have contractual agreements with the government and have invested too much in their Colombian operations to leave, a situation that allows the insurgency to continue its attacks while reaping the royalties.

Rural Kenya Transforms Urban U.S. Kids

Stephen Buckley in Lalkipia

UNTIL a few months ago, Michael Gambrill, 13, could not write a coherent sentence. His spelling was atrocious, his thoughts muddled beyond recognition.

Asked to describe a simple scene last year, Michael wrote: "It was a man wher like reptile. So he was thaing a hick in te forest. In he fan a egg. So he hared home."

Eight months later, after intensive work in reading and spelling in a school 10,000 miles from his Baltimore home, Michael described the same scene: "A man found a large egg in the forest. He picked it up and carre it away. He took the egg to his home. He sat the egg on the table."

Michael's extraordinary progress is the fruit of a novel experiment undertaken by the Abell Foundation of Baltimore.

That the foundation opened the Baraka School nearly a year ago is not novel; education is one of the organization's passions. What is novel is the school's location: a tiny, dirt-road-and-tin-shack town in the middle of north-central Kenya.

The foundation hopes to save boys from inner-city Baltimore by sending them to school in a setting where they can avoid the pitfalls of violence-addled neighborhoods, family struggles and suffocating peer pressure. It hopes that a safe environment, a back-to-basics teaching philosophy and lots of one-on-one attention will revive these students' interest in academic study during the middle-school years — typically a tumultuous stage of their lives.

If this experiment in the Kenyan countryside works, the foundation plans to build other such schools around sub-Saharan Africa and in the Caribbean. Already education activists and other philanthropic groups have contacted Baraka officials about how to start similar schools.

"We can't reach everyone in Baltimore public schools," said Susan Kikwai, a Kenyan who helped organize the school and helps run it. "But it's a beginning."

Kikwai is one of two Kenyans on the Baraka faculty; the other four teachers are American. She and other school officials stress that although cross-cultural experience is one purpose of the school, academic study is its reason for being.

Michael is not alone in his academic progress. Most of the 18 boys at the school this year improved their reading scores by two grade levels. Those who were barely doing subtraction have vaulted to fractions, word problems and decimals. Each was tested by the Baltimore city school system to ensure he had learned enough to advance a grade, and each passed.

"A lot of people think, isn't it nice, we're taking kids out of the city," said Laura Doherty, whose husband, Chris Doherty, was the school's first headmaster. "They may get this wonderful experience but won't be able to find a job. Then what? If they didn't learn to read and write, they're doomed. The school part is why we're here."

Of the 18 boys who attended the Baraka School, all were from Baltimore, and most were from poor and working-class families. Only two live with their natural mother and father. Some boys have parents who have steady jobs and are active in their communities. Some have parents who are drug abusers; others have siblings who are gang members.

Antione Lewis, 13, said the school drew him because "I wanted to change my life. I wanted to get away from the streets of Baltimore. I wanted to go someplace to learn how to be a man."

No hard rules govern whom the school accepts, but Baraka officials seek students who are poor and working-class and are struggling academically. They generally shun students who already have had major jousts with the law.

They want boys who are bright but need support, as well as marginal students who may blossom under intense instruction. And, of course, they are looking for students most likely to adapt smoothly to life so far from home.

The school sits in the shadow of Mount Kenya, and the 150 acres of grounds are dotted with yellow and orange flowers, mango and guava trees, olive trees and gorgeous bougainvillea. All over the empty green spaces, birds flit and chirp. Butterflies float and dip.

THERE is no television in this town 150 miles north of Nairobi, Kenya's capital, so the boys must be creative in their recreation. They hunt for frogs and turtles. They gather dung from termite hills — for use in art class.

"In the city, they feel like they have to act tough," said Kate Walsh, head of the Baraka School project and education program officer for the Abell Foundation, founded in 1953 by the A.S. Abell Company, which then owned the Baltimore Sun newspaper. "Here, they don't have to act tough. They can be little boys."

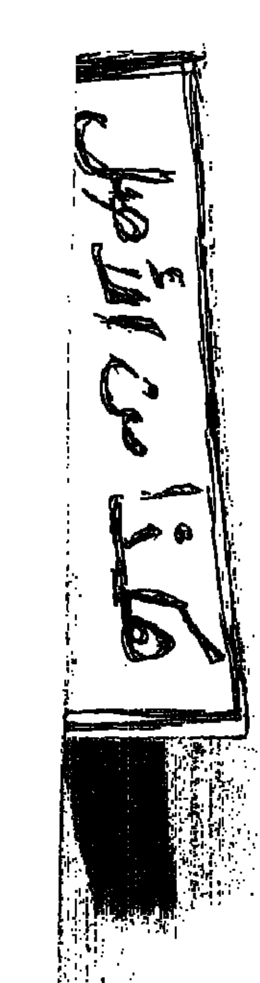
But the reality of Baltimore's streets has struck home for the Gambrills. While Michael has been in Africa, three good friends have been shot dead. "That's why I'm glad he's over in Africa," said Tammy Gambrill, 36, Michael's mother, sitting in their small apartment in the Druid Hill section of Baltimore. "That might have been him [shot] one of those times. I know where he's at. I know he's safe."

At first, Michael had what Chris Doherty called "a white-hot burning supernova hatred" for the school. He tried to run away several times. He eventually warmed to the place. That came in part because three boys — whom Michael had befriended — were sent home after a few weeks for, among other things, starting fights and fires. Suddenly, Michael enjoyed learning Swahili and chess. His reading and spelling greatly improved.

His letters went from gibberish to this: "You should expect my behavior to be changed. My attitude changed by me not going off on teachers anymore, and I do not try to get into fights for the fun of it."

When Michael came home in July, a Christmas wreath hung on the apartment door. A Christmas tree stood in the living room, with a two-foot high Valentine's Day card and an Easter basket beneath it.

Tammy Gambrill missed her son. But that will not stop her from sending him back to the Baraka School in the fall.



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Writer In Exile

Steven Moore

THROUGH THE DARK LABYRINTH
A Biography of Lawrence Durrell
By Gordon Bowker
St. Martin's. 480pp. $29.95.

THIS BIOGRAPHY couldn't be more timely. Considered until recently one of England's premier novelists of the post-war period, Durrell has been slipping into oblivion since his death in 1990. Of his 16 novels, only the four of his Alexandria Quartet (and a throwaway thriller) remain in print. His U.S. publisher declined to bring out the handsome one-volume edition of his Avignon Quintet published in England in 1992, easily the greatest British novel since . . . well, since The Alexandria Quartet appeared in the late '50s.

Born in India in 1912, Durrell had a Kiplingesque childhood that forever colored his view of dour England. It was a privileged upbringing, and included a Jesuit education in Darjeeling surrounded by Buddhists. England, by contrast, was bleak and colorless when he arrived there in 1923 to continue his education. As soon as he was old enough he began to explore the gaslit night life of bohemian London. He was already writing by this time, mostly poetry, and supporting himself by playing jazz piano at night and working odd jobs by day. Failing the entrance exams to college, he began writing his first novel and began courting the woman who was to become the first of his four wives, Nancy Myers. It must be stated at the outset that Durrell was a terrible husband to all his wives — violent, temperamental, unfaithful. Durrell mistreated his wives, but Bowker doesn't, one of his many admirable traits as a biographer.

Durrell took the first opportunity to leave England and in 1935 moved with Nancy to the island of Corfu. (It's interesting how many of Britain's major novelists of this century went into self-imposed exile: Joyce, Lowry, Beckett, Burgess . . .) He loved it there and except for brief visits never lived in Britain again, preferring the sunny Mediterranean to rainy "Pudding Island" (as he called England) and a pagan atmosphere to a puritanical one. Two things happened that crucial year: his first novel was accepted for publication (a forgotten book called Pied Piper Of Lovers)



Lawrence Durrell, a brilliant but troubled writer

and he discovered Henry Miller. Tropic Of Cancer was a bombshell for Durrell, exploding his notions of what a novel could be and freeing him to write his first truly Durrellian novel, The Black Book. Durrell wrote Miller a fan letter and the two became lifelong friends. Miller introduced Durrell to his lover at the time, Anais Nin, who also became a friend for life.

The Black Book was intended as the first of a trilogy, but two decades would pass before its author returned to fiction in full force. World War II caused Durrell to flee to Egypt, which was to provide the setting for his great quartet years later. Egypt during the war was edgy and exotic, but it was a difficult time for Durrell: His marriage fell apart and his fiction foundered, though he did complete the first of many travel books, Prospero's Cell.

After the war, Durrell drifted from Egypt to Rhodes, married again, spent a disastrous year in Argentina and a few more in Yugoslavia, then moved to Cyprus — all the while churning out poetry, plays and travel books while his Alexandrian novel fermented. Justine, the first in the quartet, finally appeared in 1957 and made Durrell a literary celebrity. It ended his unwanted diplomatic career and allowed him to concentrate on his increasingly complex novels: The Alexandria Quartet (1957-60), the two-volume Revolt Of Aphrodite (1968-70), and The Avignon Quintet (1974-85) — three mega-novels that dwarf the achievement of any other British novelist of his generation.

Gordon Bowker's account is admirable: well-researched, detailed while avoiding the minutiae that clog some literary biographies, sympathetic but not uncritical. Bowker provides an evenhanded account of his alleged incest with his daughter Sappho. Durrell treated his gifted but tormented daughter abominably, but the incest was apparently more psychological than physical, as Sappho admitted to her husband. (She committed suicide in 1985.)

The principal fault of Through The Dark Labyrinth isn't Bowker's but that of the Durrell estate, which refused him permission to quote from Durrell's works or letters (except for the briefest examples). This is one more example of a growing problem in literary scholarship: the stranglehold some estates keep on their inherited authors. Apparently the Durrell estate is sponsoring an "official" biography, and it had better be good. Until then, Through The Dark Labyrinth is a welcome book for both Durrell fans and anyone interested in the literary life.

No Huddled Masses

Stanley Karnow

THE OTHER AMERICANS
How Immigrants Renew Our Country, Our Economy, and Our Values
By Joel Millman
Viking. 369pp. $24.95.

FOR A NATION of immigrants, America throughout its history has been peculiarly schizoid on the question of immigration. Franklin fulminated against the German influx into Pennsylvania, the Know-Nothing Party accused the Irish of promoting papist plots, and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 sparked a series of egregiously racist statutes designed to keep Asians out of the country. By contrast, the Poles who worked in Pittsburgh's steel mills are exalted as industrial heroes, the Jewish scientists responsible for nuclear energy have been deified, and a renovated Ellis Island is currently a shrine to the "huddled masses."

The debate still rages as restrictionists seek to scrap the key provisions of the 1965 immigration reform, which drastically liberalized earlier statutes and, over the past three decades, has opened the door to hundreds of thousands — most of them Hispanics, Africans, Caribbeans and Asians. The chauvinists maintain that they are stealing jobs from native-born labor, clogging the welfare rolls and inflicting costly bilingual classes on schools.

But as Joel Millman amply illustrates, the case against immigrants is flimsy. By nature they are a superior breed. Knowing that they face adjustment problems in a strange and frequently hostile environment, they are nevertheless ready to leave their homelands in hopes of improving their lives. And, while they often encounter difficulties, on the whole they contribute significantly to the economy as entrepreneurs, technicians, craftsmen, farmers and unskilled workers.

Their crime rate is remarkably low, and, contrary to allegations that they are a fiscal burden, they generate more tax revenues than they take in services. New York, for instance, owes its revival to their presence. Going into derelict ghettos, they have refurbished crumbling buildings and created middle-class neighborhoods.

Their achievements hinge on a trait ideally prized by Americans: devotion to family. As Millman observes, the chief motive for the vast majority of them in coming to the United States is to join relatives already here. They bring with them their "village culture," which requires members of the clan to assist each other — a traditional practice that accounts for much of their dynamism. Parents sacrifice themselves to educate their children, who in turn strive to succeed in order to repay their debt to their parents. This sense of mutual obligation stretches back to Latin America and Asia, where millions depend for survival on remittances from kinfolk in America.

A reporter by trade, Millman describes the experiences of newcomers in different parts of the country. He is a meticulous researcher and vivid writer, and his approach is far more effective than if had he involved himself in the polemics of the immigration controversy.

Consider Fernando Sanchez, who arrived from Mexico in 1968. He settled in the burned-out South Bronx, toiled as a dishwasher and cook, and imported two brothers and a wife. By 1986, with $10,000 in savings, he bought a used tortilla press and launched Tortilleria Piaxtla in a garage. Today his company has a branch in Providence and a string of Brooklyn bakeries and grosses $4 million annually.

PAKISTANI immigrants also exemplify vibrant enterprise. In 1995, when New York authorized the issuance of new taxi medallions, they expanded the flotillas of cabs they already ran. Meanwhile, Dominicans, Senegalese, Haitians and others were entering the jitney business, shuttling commuters to the subways, which has boomed as a result. The spread of these gypsy cars has further stimulated the growth of small auto-repair shops, insurance firms and all-night diners that cater to drivers. This seemingly inconsequential venture is funneling sizable sums into the treasury.

Immigrants are usually regarded as urban dwellers, but Millman finds them tilling the land as well. In New Jersey, Koreans cultivate Oriental vegetables for Asian restaurants, and in California a former encyclopedia salesman from Hong Kong called Tom Lam earns a fortune by furnishing gourmets with such esoteric delicacies as baby choy mue, a variety cabbage.

Millman's perhaps overly rosy picture of immigrants may incur the wrath of both xenophobes determined to prove that immigrants are a drain on society and advocacy groups that contend that they cannot flourish without government help. If so, he is right on the mark.

Plumbing the Depths

David Pawson

THE UNIVERSE BELOW
Discovering the Secrets of the Deep Sea
By William J. Broad
Simon & Schuster. 432pp. $30.

THE DEEP SEA, usually defined as that part of the ocean into which sunlight does not penetrate, covers about three-quarters of the earth's surface. Exploration of this vast area began in the 1870s, and to date we have learned this: The deep sea is endlessly fascinating, forbidding, bizarre, dangerous, mysterious and beautiful; it is a great and vital component of the engine that drives this planet; it regulates the world's climate; it is increasingly important as a source of food; and, fortunately for us, it serves as an efficient disposal site or "sink" for all of the carbon dioxide produced by our automobiles.

Yet, more than one expert has suggested that all of the millions of sea-floor photographs taken by remotely operated cameras, and all of the surveys conducted by manned and unmanned submersibles, and all of the thousands of scientific trawl hauls, would add up to a thoroughly detailed study of perhaps 50 square miles of sea floor — we have 140 million square miles to go! We have a lot to learn everywhere in the world's oceans, especially in the immense areas where volcanic activity may be occurring, along the ridges of the central Atlantic, the eastern and western Pacific, the central Indian Ocean and elsewhere.

I have made hundreds of dives in manned submersibles, and on every dive the deep ocean has revealed not only new animals in abundance but also new information on the importance of the deep sea in our day-to-day lives. There are direct and often startling links between what's happening on land and what's happening on the seabed three miles down. The great importance of the deep ocean to our very survival is belied by the pitifully small amount of money expended in its exploration.

In The Universe Below, technological aspects and human stories are not forgotten as William Broad discusses the search for sunken treasures and military hardware, from a hydrogen bomb off the coast of Spain to the renowned Titanic. There is also an account of the scramble during the 1970s and 1980s to develop technology and international protocols for mining minerals from the deep-sea floor. The discovery of hot volcanic vents that spew superheated water and abundant minerals into the deep sea led to another flurry of speculation.

From the point of view of biological exploration, exciting discoveries are legion. Just recently two astonishing and contrasting facts came to light: The deep-dwelling orange roughy fish, now sold in most supermarkets, can take more than 150 years to grow to its full size of about 18 inches, and may not reach sexual maturity until it is 30 years old. In contrast, the strange redheaded "tubeworms" that cluster around hot vents on the deep-sea floor can colonize an area as tiny juveniles and within just one year grow to a length of six feet or more.

The comprehensive smorgasbord of information offered by the text is relaxed, unpretentious and stimulating. In describing some of his own experiences in submersibles, Broad expresses the range of emotions — apprehension, awe, curiosity, frustration — familiar to all deep divers. The end result is a fascinating, beautifully written account of a truly unfamiliar world. As a deep-sea devotee, I welcome The Universe Below. The author has performed a valuable service by summarizing the current state of our knowledge, identifying the rewards that deep-sea exploration can offer, and making an eloquent plea for more intensive research in the future.

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Poet among pianists

Sviatoslav Richter

SVIATOSLAV RICHTER, who has died aged 82, was one of the supreme virtuosos of the century and the leading Russian pianist of the past 50 years.

It was at the height of the cold war in the mid-1950s, after Emil Gilels had, as a pioneer in the West among Soviet pianists, demonstrated new dimensions of virtuosity, that rumour spread of an artist even more remarkable, a pianist so sensitive that he regularly resisted the world of concert-giving, let alone recording.

That mystery figure was soon revealed as Richter, and rumour proved totally accurate, first on record, but then when he finally appeared in the West in person in 1960. Here was a pianist with a sound totally his own, refined and transparent yet wonderfully projected. Richter was a visionary and a poet among pianists, one so sensitive, so introspective that on occasion his very restraint could leave an audience momentarily disappointed. Yet when the occasion was right, no pianist was more magnetic in weaving his spell.

In Britain he was never more at home in performances than when playing for Benjamin Britten's Aldeburgh Festival. He was a regular visitor there, and specially enjoyed performing in the intimate venues that the festival provided, notably Blythburgh church and Aldeburgh parish church.

Such a deeply sensitive artist was always reluctant to commit himself to setting interpretations on disc. Though he was persuaded over the years to make many fine studio recordings, a high proportion of the recordings which reveal his special magic are of live performances. Happily, more and more of them have been appearing over the past few years.

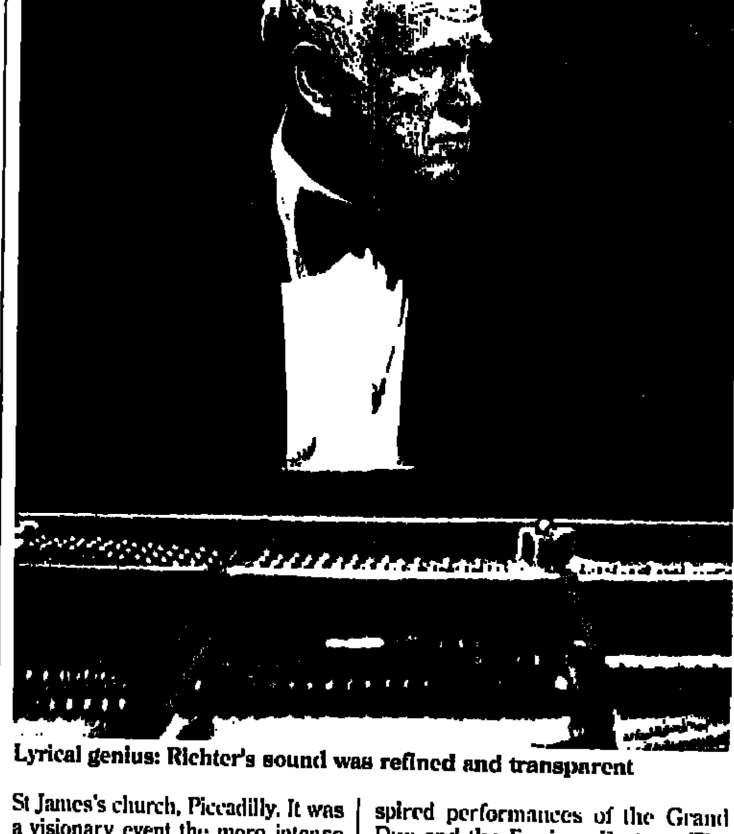
Richter was born in Zhitomir in Ukraine, the son of an organist and composer, who taught him the rudiments of music, but left him free in his earliest years to develop his own piano technique. When only 15 he became a repetiteur at the Odessa Opera, and went on to conduct there from the age of 18. He gave his first piano recital in Odessa at the age of 19 — relatively late compared with many of this century's greatest pianists. Only in 1937 did he begin formal instrumental training at the Moscow Conservatory as a pupil of the legendary teacher and pianist, Heinrich Neuhaus.

Prokofiev was one of those who quickly appreciated Richter's interpretative genius. It was Richter who during the second world war gave the first performances of three of Prokofiev's greatest sonatas, nos 6, 7 and 9, the last dedicated to him.

He made his debut in the West as concerto soloist in Chicago. He soon appeared in western Europe too, in Germany and France, Italy and Britain, but over the years he was sparing of his appearances, and often — whether through genuine ill-health, a hatred of travel by train and air or simple reluctance — he would cancel engagements.

In his later years he was ever more demanding over playing only in conditions sympathetic to him. A technician from Yamaha would prepare the piano specially for him, yet once he was performing, there was not a hint of display, for physically in his movement he was the most restrained of pianists.

It was a paradox too that for a special occasion he would happily agree to an unexpected appearance — to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of the recording producer and impresario, Walter Legge, he gave an unforgettable performance of Schubert's last and greatest Sonata, the B flat D 960, in St James's church, Piccadilly. It was a visionary event the more intense for its intimacy.



Lyrical genius: Richter's sound was refined and transparent

As he used to say, "In a sense I play for myself, but more than that I try to play for the composer — indeed to concentrate entirely on doing that. It's not true to say that I'm unaware of an audience, but I know that if I am over-aware of an audience, then my concentration on realising a composer's intentions lapses, and I don't give of my best." His intense self-awareness could not be more clearly revealed.

My own favourite memory of Richter's playing was when in the early 1960s in Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh, he joined Britten in playing Schubert piano duets, uniquely inspired performances of the Grand Duo and the F minor Fantasy. The one great artist sparked off the other, but years later Britten told me that Richter was so totally unused to sharing a keyboard with another pianist, that for the warmly lyrical second subject of the Grand Duo — given to the second pianist's right hand — Britten had to squeeze up the keyboard round Richter's outstretched left elbow. Such is the stuff of great performances.

Edward Greenfield

Sviatoslav Teofilovich Richter, pianist, born March 20, 1915; died August 1, 1997

Nigerian firebrand

Fela Kuti

FELA KUTI, who has died aged 58 from an Aids-related disease, was the best-known and most controversial musician in Africa. A flamboyant rebel who spent much of his life criticising successive military regimes in his native Nigeria, he became famous for his outrageous lifestyle and outspoken statements on religion, politics and sex. But he deserves to be remembered not just for his wild, often infuriating antics, but for his main achievement, his fine musicianship and the creation of Afro-Beat, a new musical style in which jazz and African influences were mixed in semi-improvised songs that could last for up to an hour.

The best place to hear Kuti's blend of firebrand politics and musical invention was his own, much-raided club, The Shrine, out in the Lagos suburb of Ikeja. By the time he arrived — often around two or three in the morning — the crowds were already crammed around the stage, packed between the corrugated iron walls, the wooden cages holding Kuti's scantily clad dancers, and the stalls where traders sold spliffs at a penny apiece.

In 1969 he took his band on tour in America, and though the tour itself was unsuccessful, Kuti's political outlook underwent a radical change. In Los Angeles he met up with members of the Black Panther Party, and consquently his own radical ideas on Pan-Africanism developed.

Back in Lagos, he changed the name of his band to Nigeria 70, then Africa 70, and began putting his political and musical ideas together in his own club, The Afro Spot, later re-named The Shrine. His band expanded, and were joined by roadies, friends, and girl singers and dancers, who all moved in to the surrounding compound. The authorities were not impressed. In 1974 the club was raided for the first time by police looking for drugs, and Kuti was imprisoned. After a subsequent raid he declared the area around the compound and club to be an independent state, the Kalakuta Republic, which he protected with an electric fence.

More trouble was now inevitable and his clashes with successive military regimes led to several spells in jail.

In the early 1980s, when he recorded much of his best material, including the albums Black President and Underground System, it seemed that Fela Anikulapa Kuti (as he now called himself) was destined to become a major international star. But in September 1984, as he was preparing for a major American tour, he was jailed on currency charges at a time when yet another military regime had taken over.

Fela Kuti was an infuriating but often brilliant figure who lived a bizarre but painful life and should be remembered not just for his antics but his bravery and his music. His eldest son Femi, for many years a part of his band at The Shrine, now seems set to take over his father's great musical legacy.

Robin Denselow

Fela Anikulapo Kuti (formerly Fela Ransome-Kuti), musician and political rebel, born October 15, 1938; died August 2, 1997

Struggles with the Ugly Spirit

William S Burroughs

WILLIAM S Burroughs, who has died aged 83, was the hard man of Hip. His aims as a writer were traditional, to entertain and instruct, but the means he chose to express them were unclassifiable, sometimes indescribable, occasionally unspeakable.

Burroughs was born in St Louis, Missouri, into a family that was well off but, as he repeatedly insisted, "not rich". He read English at Harvard but his real studies began when he reached New York in the early 1940s and met the young men who would later be grouped as the Beat Generation: Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassady.

In the late 1940s, he tried his hand at farming in Texas and Louisiana, growing tomatoes as a useful cover for his marijuana and opium crops. By this time he had met Joan Vollmer who, though he was homosexual and she was not, became "Mrs Burroughs" (they were never formally married).

The bond with Joan was close, but troubled. From her he received a sympathetic understanding probably never reproduced in a relationship with a man. She was a highly intelligent, attractive woman, brought low by a dependence on Benzedrine and drink. She had a daughter by a previous marriage and a son with Burroughs, William Burroughs III, also a writer, who died in 1981.

Joan's life ended on a September afternoon in Mexico City in 1951. The couple had joined a drunken party in a flat above a bar. Burroughs was carrying a gun, and at some point said to Joan: "It's time for our William Tell act. Put that glass on your head." She did, and Burroughs fired an inch too low, killing her. He was bailed after a week in jail and when his Mexican lawyer skipped the country, having killed someone himself, Burroughs followed.

He was never tried for the shooting but according to his biographer Ted Morgan, entered "a nightmare that he would live for the rest of his days". Ostensibly, Joan's death was an accident, but Burroughs was harried by the dreadful thought that, subconsciously, he had meant to kill her. In the introduction to the novel Queer, written in the 1950s but not published until 1985, he wrote with candour about his feelings:

"I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan's death, and to a realisation of the extent to which this event has motivated and formulated my writing . . . The death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and manoeuvred me into a life-long struggle, in which I had no choice except to write my way out."

After two expeditions into the jungles of South America Burroughs moved to Tangier, intending to stay only a few weeks but remaining for several years. Drugs and sex were cheap. Burroughs met Paul Bowles and Brion Gysin, with whom he would later form an uncompromising avant-garde partnership in Paris.

Skulking through the back alleys of Tangier, seeking a connection, Burroughs became known to locals as "el hombre invisible". His most famous book, Naked Lunch, was written there, fuelled by heroin and marijuana.

Burroughs later discovered a new method of writing, which, he told Ginsberg imperiously, could not be explained "until you have necessary training". Gysin had stumbled on the cut-up technique while playing around with old newspapers and a pair of scissors in his room at the Hotel Rachou in rue Gît-le-couer in Paris, thereafter known as "the Beat Hotel". Burroughs, also a resident, extended the experiment, and soon the Olympia Press had published two cut-up novels, The Soft Machine (1961) and The Ticket That Exploded (1962). The trilogy was completed by Nova Express in 1964.

Burroughs returned to the US in 1974, living first in New York, in "the Bunker", a disused locker room without windows on the Bowery, and then, from 1982 on, in Lawrence, Kansas.

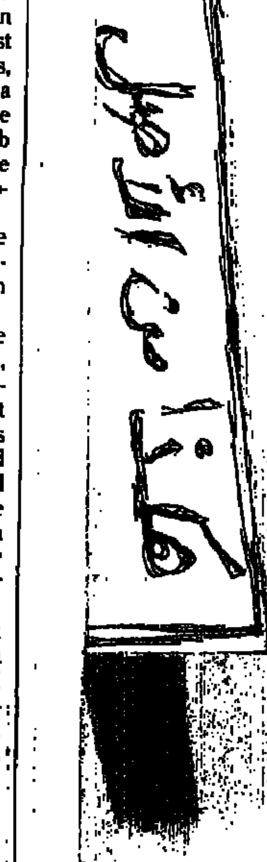
The books continued to flow — Cities Of The Red Night, The Place Of Dead Roads, My Education, Ghost Of Chance — mixing science fiction, the western, the travel book, the dream journal and other genres. His publisher, Grove Press, has just completed a manuscript of Burroughs's previously unpublished writings which will be released in 1998.

Burroughs was also a painter, and his efforts in that medium are as idiosyncratic as in any other. He held several exhibitions of paintings on wood riddled with bullet holes ("shotgun art", he called it).

There was no other woman in his life after Joan. Her death continued to haunt him, and in 1992, with Ginsberg present, he underwent an exorcism ceremony at the hands of a Sioux medicine man to evict the Ugly Spirit which he believed had entered him at the time of Joan's death. His main affection in later life was reserved for his cats, and he published a small homage to his feline friends, The Cat Inside.

James Campbell

William Seward Burroughs II, writer, born February 5, 1914; died August 2, 1997



North and South have many problems in common. We need to understand that to be able to tackle them, writes **Andrew Simms**

Trading places the world over

FEW of us know who our geographical next-door neighbour is. And in the age of globalisation and extended social responsibility, our real neighbours — the ones we rely on for the necessities of life — are as likely to be growing sugar-cane for poverty wages in Haiti or luxury flowers in Kenya as they are to be a lonely pensioner or hard-up single parent in a nearby block of flats.

The world is being brought closer together by information technology and trade, and at the same time it is being driven further apart by gaps between rich and poor. In the last decade, politics and economics have been shifting like great geological, continental plates. And the resulting friction has caused human earthquakes.

For all the goodwill, we are failing to meet the scale of the challenge. Conflict and the breakdown of states are still destroying communities and creating millions of refugees. The dynamic is the same in both North and South. There are refugees in Europe as much as there are in Africa. The teenager sleeping in the doorway of an expensive London shop and the farmer in Africa who cannot feed or care for her family are suffering the failures of the same economic system.

The creed of free-market economists — privatisation and leaving big companies to regulate themselves, maximising profits at all costs — is now influential in all poor countries. World Bank and International Monetary Fund economists refer to it innocuously as "structural adjustment". The same system applies in rich northern countries. Unemployment, homelessness and poverty are the result in both places.

The development movement was founded on the idea that poverty existed elsewhere, in "the Third World". It was an idea that assumed that the First World and its programme of modernisation had all the answers. Looking back, it seems a strange idea. With regard to the present, it is simply false.

You can see the change in little ways: India refused aid after an earthquake and shocked sensibilities in Britain. A community in Asia had the audacity to offer help to alleviate hardship in a city in northern England. When Hindus in India can offer to buy all "diseased" British cows, it is clear that times have changed.

The old certainties are gone. The accepted methods of aid work are now simply inefficient. Small, local organisations often have the best idea of what needs to be done in an emergency. Yet in many disaster and relief situations, the large international agencies, including the United Nations, can brush them aside.


Only a true partnership between First and Third World will harness human resources PHOTO: GREG WILLIAMS

The basis for stable or sustainable communities — either in disaster areas in the Third World or in Britain — will not be found without directly harnessing the human resources of the people we say we want to help. True partnerships demand inclusion.

Individuals and agencies, in Britain and elsewhere, who have first-hand experience of what it means to be marginalised, must share their knowledge. Shelter, the British campaign against homelessness, could speak about the human costs of structural adjustment in Britain along with many of the church groups working on poverty, while Christian Aid tells of homelessness in Africa and Latin America.

It may be that a micro-credit scheme, making low interest loans to women heads of poor families in Bangladesh, might be just as successful on a poverty-stricken estate in Manchester. Such programmes are now working among the poorest communities in the mega-cities of the United States. Poverty groups in Britain could now surge forward with a creative programme that began in Asia. That is global partnership.

At the present time, one side has all the power in a relationship based on giving emergency relief and traditional aid. International trade rules favour the rich against the poor.

These are yesterday's rules and we need to change them in the light of new global partnerships.

Truly imaginative partnerships for long-term development, however, utilise positive and far deeper parts of the human character — wisdom, wit, courage, generosity of spirit and cheerfulness. These are the building blocks of hope.

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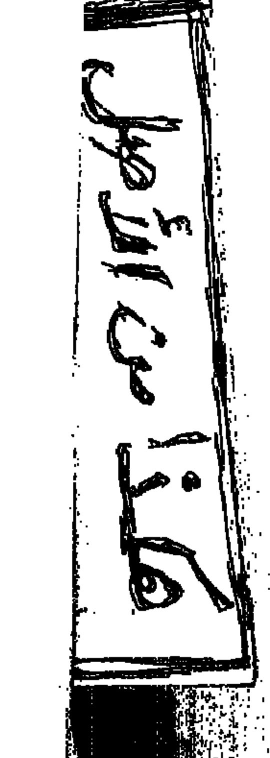
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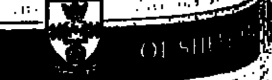
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Magazines give smoking a cool image

Chris Mihill

STYLE magazines such as The Face and Loaded are fuelling the increase in smoking among young people by glamorising the image of cigarettes, Britain's Health Education Authority says this week.

A study by the authority has found that men's magazines are using images of cigarettes more heavily than female magazines and far more than Sunday newspaper lifestyle sections.

Researchers at the HEA also questioned young people about factors encouraging them to smoke and found that stylish shots of fashionable people with a cigarette helped to make them think that smoking was glamorous.

"The use of cigarettes in fashion or style photography is promoting a glamorous image of smoking, undermining years of health warnings according to the young people studied," says the report.

Researchers looked at a variety of magazines over a three-month period. Men's publications and style magazines were the most likely to include images of smoking or cigarettes. Over the three-month period, The Face carried 22 such images and Loaded 21. Both magazines declined to comment on the findings.

The HEA asked for the views of around 150 young people, aged 13 to 24, and found that glossy photography of models with cigarettes was influential. The young people associated images of smoking with characteristics such as power, individuality and self-assertiveness.

The report coincides with a study by the recruitment firm Reed Graduates, which shows that one in five students and recent graduates continue to smoke after leaving college. The HEA said the finding was important because it challenged previous assumptions that smoking was associated with poor education and low socio-economic status.

The latest government figures for 1996 show that by the age of 15, 28 per cent of boys and 33 per cent of girls are regular smokers. In 1982, 24 per cent of boys at this age were smokers as were 25 per cent of girls.



Model Kate Moss with cigarette in hand PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Big, bad petrol barons

OPINION
Christopher Reed

YOU don't have to be an ethical zealot, just a decent person, to have a major problem every time you buy a tank of petrol.

The most politically correct city in the United States, Berkeley, was recently mocked (in the Guardian by me) for almost boycotting itself out of business by banning seven major oil companies as official city suppliers. Berkeleyites are often silly, but they have a point. Where *is* the decent petroleum company?

Not the behemoth Exxon (Esso in Britain), which dumped 11 million gallons of crude on Alaska's pristine Prince William Sound in 1989, and immediately hired a public relations company to blame a boozy skipper. Exxon then tried to avoid paying $5 billion, a relatively modest sum for them, in punitive damages to ruined fishermen. Three years later, the corporation was convicted and fined $3.8 million for defrauding the US defence department, and thus the American tax payers who fund it.

The second biggest name in gas is just as much of a problem. Shell is in bed with the oppressive Nigerian government that hanged the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa for trying to salvage the land of his people, the Ogonis, from Shell's toxic depredations. It was Shell, too, that tried to dump the huge but spent Brent Spar oil rig in the North Sea last year. Challenged by Greenpeace (which later recanted), Shell eventually cancelled its plans. But the company also makes pesticides that have caused Third World farm workers to become sterile because of contact with a substance banned in the US.

Texaco is not much better. The firm was recently in the news over claims of racism and anti-Semitism among senior US managers — recorded cracking bigoted jokes to each other over the telephone. That cost Texaco $176 million. The company is now on Berkeley's blacklist for dealing with the murderous dictatorship in Burma.

Chevron, fresh from its cosy association with South Africa's former apartheid regime, now embraces such promoters of democratic freedom as Indonesia, with one ruler for 30 years, and Nigeria. The firm's record of spills and toxic escapes is disgraceful. It beat the Toxic Substances Control Act's record fine in 1994 with a bumper $17 million penalty for falsifying information about toxic compounds in one of its brands.

The Brits are not absolved from Big Bad Oil. British Petroleum has a major share in the consortium that runs the Alaskan pipeline and its terminal, from where the ill-fated tanker Exxon Valdez departed. BP shared much of the blame for the inadequate safety measures there.

In 1994, BP made a $1.4 billion settlement over unpaid taxes for its Alaska operations going back to 1978. It has worked with the corrupt top brass of the Colombian military to ensure access to the natural gas reserves it has there.

In today's world, those looking to fill up the tank *and* keep a clean conscience are pretty short of options. We might just have to walk.

CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE



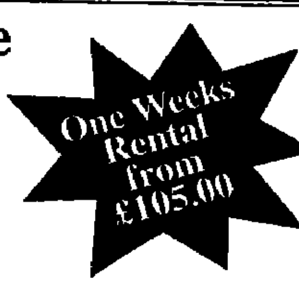
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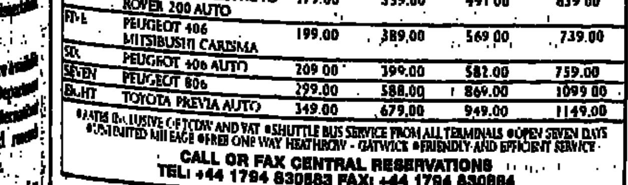
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With its liberal immigration policy, Ireland is facing an influx of refugees. But, writes **Alison Daniels**, tolerance is waning

No welcome for new migrants

ABDUL has seen many demons. In the streets of his home town in northern Algeria they took the form of security forces and government-backed militia, responsible for a catalogue of atrocities and disappearances. Fear sent his father, an elected mayor, to a safe house and Abdul fleeing into the shadowy world of contacts and false passports which smoothed a passage though Europe to freedom.

Nearly 18 months on, he doesn't need to keep a gun beside his single bed in his rented room but, despite the peace, he can't sleep much anyway. New demons fill his mind: vivid memories of the past, the kind that twist the stomach; bursts of rage at the unfairness of his exile and the friendships it has severed. Worst of all is the gnawing depression that comes from a sense of rootlessness and pointlessness, and which percolates through every waking moment. Abdul is 31 but with his thin frame and red-veined eyes he looks 10 years older.

Abdul's story is one of personal tragedy, but as an asylum seeker in a prosperous country, his plight is not extraordinary — except in one key respect. Abdul is not fighting the shadows while figuring out immigration procedures or entertaining vague hopes of a fresh start in a cosmopolitan European capital. He is in the small town of Ennis, County Clare, in the west of Ireland. His presence, and the sudden influx of several thousand other asylum seekers from Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Zaire, Nigeria, Somalia and Cuba into Dublin, Waterford, Shannon and Cork, is something of a novelty.

What to do with the refugees is Ireland's current great debate. A debate that has shone a sudden spotlight on the state's immigration law — or lack of it — and raised thorny questions about a welfare benefits system which entitles all asylum seekers to claim benefits when there are 254,867 Irish citizens on the dole.

Most significantly, the visible presence of foreigners on the streets and in the welfare offices has tested long-held notions of Irish racial tolerance and found them wanting — a particular irony in the context of Ireland's past, its record of charity work overseas, and at a time when Ireland boasts of its booming economy and its greater role in Europe. The stirrings of latent intolerance also jars in a year when the state made great play of commemorating the 150th anniversary of the potato famine and the consequent diaspora of the Irish.

Rumblings in the Irish media about a refugee "crisis" reached fever pitch during the Irish elections in June. There has been a splurge of newspaper reports about teams of professional beggars and petty criminals arriving under false pretences and false passports, and hordes of teenage Romanian hookers undercutting Dublin's prostitutes. Adding grist to the mill has been the murder of a Dublin man by a refugee.

The Garda play down any suggestion of a crime wave as hyperbole but the negative impression is pervasive. It is not hard to find someone who claims to have been accosted by a Romanian beggar or who espouses the not-in-my-backyard philosophy. The flipside, evidence of racial harassment, is largely anecdotal.

The neighbour of a Bosnian family is happy to discuss the issue provided he is not named. "There's a Bosnian lad with one leg who stands near the main road there with a sign begging money from drivers when they stop at the lights. Yes, there are Irish tinkers, but the point is these Bosnians are getting welfare. There are a quarter of a million Irish unemployed already. The thing is, these refugees can get benefit by just arriving and writing their name. If you're Irish, you have to tell them what you've been doing for the last 20 years before they give you a penny."

Vague expressions about human rights are often tempered with the suspicion that Ireland has acquired a reputation as a soft target. As one woman put it: "The Irish can't really complain. After all, everyone knows someone who's gone to England to get a job. It's just people aren't used to seeing it here. You hear about people hiding in trucks and getting a house and all paid for. It must seem like paradise." Xenophobic sentiments expressed privately have been given a public airing by people like Aine Ni Chonaill, a Cork schoolteacher who stood as an independent candidate on an anti-immigration platform in the election. She railed against asylum seekers whom she described as too numerous and largely bogus.

Put in a European context, outside observers might express astonishment at any suggestion that Ireland is being flooded by a sea of refugees. However, department of justice figures have come as a shock in a country used for generations to expressing such statistics in reverse. In the first six months of this year there have been almost 2,000 applications for asylum. Contrast that with 1,179 for the whole of 1996, 424 in 1995 and a mere 39 in 1992. Of the 1996/97 figures it is impossible to say how many are genuine asylum seekers and how many are economic migrants — a category into which all Irish emigrants fit.

With the country's Refugee Act passed more than a year ago but not yet implemented because, in part, of a High Court dispute over the appointment of a refugee commissioner, the outgoing Fine Gael coalition government passed emergency legislation aimed at stemming the flow of refugees arriving via the UK. All non-European Union nationals arriving from Britain must now meet the same entry requirements as non-EU nationals arriving from any other part of the world. From the perspective of the department of justice, the measure has succeeded in weeding out freeloaders. In the first fortnight since it was implemented, 109 people were refused entry, of whom only three were reportedly claiming asylum.

Running in parallel with the clampdown, the government has attempted to review its inadequate procedures for processing asylum claims, which have to date taken from one to six years.

These *ad hoc* measures have failed to impress immigration lawyers such as Noleen Blackwell and the Irish Refugee Council, who describe the emergency legislation as draconian and going against the spirit of the Refugee Act.

Put it to Abdul that he is a drain on the Irish taxpayer and he expresses gratitude for his welfare cheque but points out if his asylum application was dealt with a little speedier he might be able to support himself. "I spent six years studying at university. I worked for a petroleum company and I speak several languages but here I can't do anything for this society or myself. Here I do nothing all day, I can't plan my life. If I did not think I would be shot at the airport in Algeria I would go."

OTHER refugees have chosen to raise their heads above the parapet and add their own voices. Khalid, a Shia Muslim from southern Iraq, has set up a refugee association to assist new arrivals and is a fierce critic of the anti-immigration lobby. He crackles with energy, talks non-stop, rattles off lengthy rebuttals but falls silent and wipes away tears when asked to describe what befell his relatives.

On a whistlestop tour of immigrants' Dublin, Khalid illustrates the problems facing those attempting to slot into a monoculture society. We visit a Zairean holed up in a crummy flat in a city centre estate notorious for its drugs problem and its vigilante war with pushers. In another rented room, another Zairean enjoys freedom by spending his day huddled in bed, suffering from traumatic stress disorder.

"Look," says Khalid, "we are not animals who survive only on food. The majority of people did not imagine they would come here. It is not easy being a refugee. I lost my job, I lost my family and my home. I'm a physicist and I can't work in my field. I have lost my roots and that is very hard at times. What I do not want to lose is my future."



'We are not animals who survive only on food' . . . Khalid from Iraq is a physicist who has to rely on benefits PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES MEEHAN

Africa is caught on a cash hook

A deal with the European Union could lead to overfishing and economic disaster, writes **Charlie Pye-Smith**

OVER the next five years one of Africa's most impoverished nations will get around $200 million for a fisheries agreement with the European Union. In return, Mauritania must allow a certain number of EU vessels to fish in its waters. But what sounds like a good deal may lead to disaster, says fisheries consultant Sophie des Clers: "It makes overfishing inevitable." According to Ms Des Clers, Spanish fishermen have already pushed Mauritania's hake close to extinction, and octopus — a high earner for local fishermen — will soon go the same way. Now the EU decision to reduce the home catch has highlighted the significance of agreements which give European vessels access to other nations' waters.

The EU agreements with developing countries in Africa take pressure off European stocks by keeping 20,000 fishermen employed elsewhere, and account for a fifth of the fish consumed in Europe. They also provide compensation to poor nations for fish their own fleets cannot catch. In theory the agreements are beneficial for all concerned. In practice, a growing number of critics argue, they are of dubious economic value to Europe and they threaten the future of coastal communities in Africa.

In the 1980s, investment subsidies and price guarantees encouraged the European fleet to expand — and to overfish. Now the taxpayer is called on to reduce pressure on European stocks by funding agreements that export European over-capacity.

"Given EU over-capacity, Africa should have the EU over a barrel," says Nick Johnstone of the International Institute for Environmental Development. But failure to negotiate jointly meant African states bargained from a position of relative weakness. This has proved especially significant for migratory species such as tuna. Sign on the dotted line, the EU can say, or we'll go to your neighbours — and still get your fish.

The legal obligation to ensure that Africa's marine resources are not over-exploited rests with the coastal nations, but most lack the resources to monitor stocks effectively. Peter Crampton, Member of the European Parliament for Hull, in Britain and a trenchant critic of the present arrangements, recalls a recent meeting with the Angolan fisheries minister: "He told me they had had just seven ancient boats and an old plane to police 1,500km of coast. Clearly, they can't monitor these agreements, but neither can they refuse the EU when it comes along with a big bag of cash."

Under the Maastricht treaty, the EU has a legal obligation to ensure that its various policies and programmes are "coherent". In other words, they should complement one another rather than conflict. However, the fisheries agreements appear to break the EU's own rules. Ms des Clers says one directorate pours vast amounts of money into development projects, some of which are helping strengthen the local fishing sector, while another is signing agreements likely to lead to overfishing.

This lack of policy coherence has been highlighted by the European Parliament's fisheries committee, which is sweepingly critical of the way the fisheries directorate operates. According to Mr Crampton, the directorate treats parliament as little more than a rubber stamp, often forwarding for its approval agreements that are already operational. "At present there's absolutely no democratic accountability," he says. "Parliament should be involved in the preparation of fisheries agreements and we are calling on the fisheries directorate to adopt a new set of principles which would apply to all future agreements." These should foster co-operation with local fishing industries; ensure the sustainability of fish stocks; and be in harmony with other EU policies.

Last month the EU signed a new agreement with Senegal after taking into account the views expressed by a delegation of Senegalese fishermen. "This is the first time that's happened," says Mr Crampton, "and it should become the norm." Eventually, he would like to see an end to cash-for-access agreements. "The goal, surely, is for these countries to develop their own fishing industries, catch the fish, process it and then export to it to us." As far as Europe's over-capacity is concerned, Mr Crampton believes we should be solving it in our own waters, rather than exporting bad practice to others."

Whole food . . . An organic farmer tending his potato crop in West Yorkshire PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN ANDERSON

Boom in organic food prompts rethink

Paul Brown

LARGE and increasing imports of organic food by supermarkets to satisfy booming consumer demand have led Britain's Ministry of Agriculture to consider paying farmers more to convert to organic farming.

Announcing a review, Elliot Morley, the UK's minister for the countryside, said the benefits to the countryside of organic farming were great, but the decision for farmers to convert was not easy.

Britain now has 0.3 per cent of land in organic production compared with 10 per cent in Austria and Germany, and plans for Denmark to reach 50 per cent.

Peter Segger, managing director of Organic Farm Food Ltd, an organic farmer for 20 years, says he has to import 60 per cent of produce from the Continent to satisfy demand from British supermarkets. "Organic farming employs twice as many people as conventional farming and is good for wildlife," he said.

"We are now paying Germans to work on their land and have a better countryside than us. It's economic madness, especially as demand for organic produce is booming."

He believes the ministry and the National Farmers Union have successfully opposed any expansion of organic farming in Britain. "After the BSE [mad cow] crisis consumer attitudes have changed. Let's hope the Government can reform the set minds at the ministry."

The Soil Association, which promotes organic farming, believes another review is not necessary. A spokesman said: "We have the lowest levels of organic land and the lowest organic aid. It does not take anyone very bright to see what needs to be done. Organic farming generates social and environmental benefits. To double the subsidy and the acreage of organic farms would cost $11 million a year — less than the conventional subsidy to seven big barley growers in East Anglia."

Farmers get $110 a hectare for two years to convert to organic farming, $80 in the third year, reducing to $60 and $40 thereafter. In other European countries subsidies continue after that, paid equally by the European Union and the government.

Although most supermarkets charge a high premium for organic products, since last October Tesco has had no price differential between organic and conventional products — and sales have doubled.

Mr Morley said: "The demand exists, and a fresh look is needed to see if the structure of the aid could be improved."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF DOGS can understand certain commands, how much language could they learn?

I'M NOT sure about dogs but my Siamese cat, Huitzilihuitl, is a polymath. He can name the leader of the Communist revolution in China and give the title of a novel by the great Spanish realist, Benito Perez Galdos. He knows the name given to the anti-colonial movement in Kenya in the 1950s and the 12th letter of the Greek alphabet. He's now begun the study of ancient Egyptian and can correctly pronounce the word for "cat" (miau). — *(Dr) J R Morgan, Dept of Classics, University of Wales, Swansea*

WHICH genetic characteristics do we inherit from fathers and which from mothers?

ALMOST all normal genetic characteristics can be inherited from either parent. However, the questioner can blame his father for his masculinity and his hairy ears. These features are associated solely with the Y chromosome, which the male parent alone possesses and can transmit. Paradoxically, femininity is also the father's gift to his daughter, being determined by transmission to her of his X chromosome. — *Bob Heys, retired consultant gynaecologist, Halifax, Yorkshire*

ONE recent complication has been the discovery of genes that behave differently depending on the sex of the parent from which they have been inherited — an effect known as imprinting. A number of these genes are involved in the growth of the embryo and appear to reflect a conflict of interest between the father's genes and the mother's. Two copies of the paternal version of such a gene lead to over-growth of the embryo, while two copies of the maternal version lead to reduced growth. One copy from each leads to normal growth.

It has been suggested that the mother's interest is to have as small a baby as possible (for safer delivery and reduced drain on her resources) whereas the father's is to have as large a baby as possible to give it a greater chance of survival. — *(Dr) Paul Buxton, developmental biologist, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*

WHAT was Pelmanism? And what became of the Pelman Institute?

I'M TRYING to remember. — *Denis Coates, Mount Waverley, Victoria, Australia*

PELMANISM was a card game, for one or many, aimed at memory training. The pack was laid out in four rows, face down. Then the players in turn exposed and replaced two cards. If, on revealing the first card you could remember where a counterpart lay, you placed that pair on one side and had another go. — *Jean Bentley, Birkenhead, Merseyside*

Any answers?

WHICH country has the easiest driving test? — *S Nelson, Asmara, Eritrea*

WHAT use is vitamin C to an orange? — *R Bowering, Standish, Lancashire*

WHY are the markers in the game of Monopoly in the shapes of a racing car, a Scottie dog, a battleship, an iron, a top hat and an old boot? — *D Knott, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey*

WHY does paper yellow with age? — *K Lelliott, Johannesburg, South Africa*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Letter from Bondi beach Jackie Lublin

Making waves

HAVING been told reproachfully by Radio National that at 6am the temperature in Sydney was 6C it hardly seemed worth putting on cozzies beneath the trackies before setting off for the 20-minute drive to Bondi beach.

It may not be the greatest, but it is certainly one of the most famous beaches in the world and it is where a small group of us old hands gather every week for coffee, gossip, swimming and a breath of fresh air. I am a somewhat reluctant swimmer in winter but I'll go in briefly on a day like today if the sun shines, even if the water temperature is only 16-17C (this is cold for Australians). Today there are no clouds and no wind — a perfect midwinter Sunday morning.

The water temperature doesn't deter the boardies, all sporting wetsuits, who stay out for hours beyond the first breakers. They wait for the perfect wave but are usually prepared to take a punt on something less than perfect for the pleasure and the skill involved.

Nor does the temperature deter the fitness freaks who, with eyes fixed on a transcendental horizon, jog along the shoreline, propelled by mystic messages from their earphones; nor does it daunt the power-walking fanatics self-consciously carrying hand weights and trying not to feel foolish. Today the weather is so perfect that we are all shamed into a quick dip before coffee: none of the old excuses will prevail ("terrible flu", "it's too cold", "left my cozzie at home").

We old hands are used to saying that Bondi is best in winter. Clean sand, clean water, no people — well, not nearly as many as midsummer — and the sun shining with a pleasant nip rather than an almighty kick. And we also consider that the summer sun now has the kick of a mule compared to the way it used to be.

Australians have taken the anti-sun propaganda on board in a big way. The campaign to reduce the incidence of melanoma and the premature ageing of the skin has indeed seen more people covered up ("slip" into something), using high-factor sun cream ("slop" it on) and wearing hats ("slap" a hat on). But it still surprises me that the old childhood beach staple, the multi-coloured beach umbrella, is little in evidence.

It is fashionable to stroll along the promenade at Bondi, and even more fashionable to demonstrate perilous expertise on roller blades — before meeting friends for coffee at the Pavilion. The Pavilion is a grotesque, sprawling, tatty edifice on the beach. It stands behind the tower in which mythical figures from the Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club protect us from shark attack, rips and drowning.

Into this diorama of simple hedonism troop hundreds of Japanese tourists today and every Sunday of the year, bused in for a 10-minute experience of the Australian beach life. Goodness knows what they make of it, and of us. In summer they pick their way fastidiously down the beach to the water's edge, looking sideways at the semi-naked eccentrics lounging on the sand in a welter of newspapers, radios, children, buckets and spades.

In winter they survey the scene in a bewildered way but don't venture further than the promenade. They are not allowed to stay long enough for a coffee at the Pavilion and console themselves by taking photos. Sometimes there are Japanese school groups in their uniforms, giggling and paddling, the beautiful beach an unheeded background to the imperatives of adolescence.

SURF lifesaving training goes on all through the year. Today a small group of adolescents practise belt and line rescue, then mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, all done with a comically serious, stylised, outdated military precision. But we are certainly thankful for their solemn dedication, and if, like me, you were once dragged from a dangerous rip by a belt-person you will admire them for ever.

It has to be said that Bondi the suburb is not the prettiest of places — indeed, the beachfront main drag is an aesthetic nightmare, a mix of the very suave and the very grotty. The hinterland, however, is seeing the beginnings of gentrification. Meanwhile alternative surfie communities thrive in the rundown boarding houses.

Bondi's reputation has been hit hard recently by violence and murder, so much so that the traditional booze-ridden Lonely Pom Christmas day party on the beach was circumscribed out of existence last December by stringent restrictions on alcohol.

Even so, park the car somewhere close, trudge down the grassy slope past the Pavilion, cross the road-that-should-not-be-there, and hit the beach. It makes you feel good. It's a great place to be on a sunny Sydney morning in winter.

A Country Diary

Robert Lacville

NORTH CAMEROON: Driving north across the savanna pastures of the Mbororo, we hit an African rain storm. Sheets of rain slowed our speed to 40kph. Elephant and antelope disappeared in the mist. Baboons cowered in the caves. Cattle huddled together inside their folds of thorn branches as the villages turned to mud.

By the time we reached the Benne river at Garoua, the rain was a faded blue curtain on the far horizon. The table ridge of the Tinguelin hills ends in a flat cone. Across the water, volcanic pyramids are scattered on the green landscape. You can almost feel the magma bubble.

Sunset squeezed beneath the storm clouds. The evening horizon gleamed gold, like the gates to paradise. Africa was monotheist when Arabia and Europe were still pagan. God the Creator ruled Africa 2,000 years before Jesus or Allah. The Mofou of Maroua call him Bir Erlam, the Lord of the Skies. Today, as the sunset turns deep orange beyond the purple curtain of rain, Bir Erlam is making a celestial bonfire. Distant thunder rolls. Africa grows.

Soap without hope

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

TONY JORDAN bit into a sheep's eyeball and remembered the encouraging words of his new bride. "Go to Kazakhstan! You'll never forgive yourself if you don't."

Tony, who writes EastEnders scripts, was newly married when he was invited to join a group going East Of EastEnders (Omnibus, BBC1). They were to teach the new republic of Kazakhstan how to make a soap. It was a mission of mercy. As TV News put it, "The British nation has again shown its colours as a messenger of culture. The first 12 episodes will cost $2,250,000. It's the British taxpayers we have to thank. Our soap is part of their humanitarian programme."

It was to be called Crossroads, to symbolise the Kazakhs' freedom to go where they chose. As a powerful symbol, said David (The Bill), it would open with a newborn baby. Silence fell with a bump. A Kazakh leaned forward. "The Kazakhs have a tradition of not showing their child to anybody for 40 days."

You could tell this was going to be a difficult birth.

Auditions produced a midget accordionist ("When there's a direction for an accordion player, you'll be the first person we call") and a man so big and bald he could have gone on as Genghis Khan without rehearsal. He extended a hand like a flipper. "Farkhat" he said briefly. Farkhat plays bandits.

Colin, the British producer, and Farkhat met in the Rachat Palace Hotel. The Palace is what Kublai Khan would have built if his money hadn't run out. Glass lifts ascend and descend in brilliance, like angels.

"I don't want to offend him," Farkhat said to the interpreter, "but he lives at the film studios and the hotel. He hasn't seen anything at all. He schleps around town, but he doesn't see the people for what they are. The script ends up empty, completely meaningless, a bog-standard nothing, rubbish, a total, total profanity." I would like to hear Farkhat when he does want to offend.

Having spoken his mind, he emptied every glass on the table. "He's drinking my Bacardi!" cried Colin (Brookside) poignantly.

Farkhat took Tony and a couple more to his family home. It was a biblical scene, like dropping in on Abraham. Sheep flowed down the hills like spilled milk. One had been slaughtered in their honour and an elder in a sheepskin hat eased out the eyeball. "I don't know what it's like where you come from, but here, for the honoured guest, we take the eye out. You must eat it."

You would be looking at Kazakhs for some time before you were reminded of a bunch of violets. They spoke warmly of their hospitality ("You can stay here and eat and sleep without paying for anything") and their sex drive ("If a man takes a second wife, of course the first wife is pleased because she is worn out").

Both seem true. Katrin (Emmerdale) said, "They will offer you their last piece of bread and not eat themselves. But the amount of rapes, abuse in marriages, violence between men and women here is so strong. The last thing you do is phone a policeman. You are more likely to be beaten up or raped by the policeman."

Crossroads was deadlocked. Kostya, the Kazakh producer, was stricken: "I have a feeling that won't go away of . . . imperfection. I want to set the benchmark higher." Colin was impatient: "This is television. This is what happens, this is what the job is. We have to shoot next week. I know this is alien to this part of the world, but he can't say, 'I need more time.' *There isn't any more bloody time.*"

This was true, too. Kostya was killed in a car crash soon after. The coffin was red, the armbands white, his friends dug the grave themselves. So Crossroads began with a death, not a birth.

After the first episode, the scriptwriter tried to take her name off the credits. "It's not what I wrote. He kept telling me, 'Trust us — the script will be great,' but it's unbelievably stupid." Farkhat powered through the crowd like a cannonball. David aimed a head-butt after him. The midget accordionist appeared, waving a revolver, and was disarmed by two women. Pretty well par for a launch party.

Crossroads is now sixth in the Kazakh TV ratings.

Excessive talent for plundering Irish past

THEATRE
Michael Billington

HARE, Ayckbourn and Wesker have done it before him. But now Martin McDonagh, at the age of 27, has pulled off the three-play trick, with the arrival of The Leenane Trilogy at London's Royal Court Downstairs, until September 13. Whatever one's quibbles, the trilogy is a formidable achievement.

McDonagh's purpose, over the long haul, becomes clear — to explode the myth of rural Ireland as a place of whimsical gaiety and folksy charm. The reality, he suggests, is murder, self-slaughter, spite, ignorance and familial hatred. McDonagh is not the first writer to tell us that the travel-poster Ireland conceals dark impulses: Synge, to


Mother from hell: Anna Manahan

whom he remains deeply indebted, made the point back in 1907. But McDonagh's great strength is that he combines a love of traditional story-telling with the savage ironic humour of the modern generation.

Murder, solitude and rain bind the three plays together. In The Beauty Queen Of Leenane — the best of the three — a vindictive mother and her virginal daughter are locked together in suppurating hatred. In The Skull In Connemara, a gravedigger is hotly suspected of killing his wife. And in the extraordinary The Lonesome West, two brothers, one of whom has killed their father, are closeted together in undying hostility like a penned-up Cain and Abel.

McDonagh's vision is not wholly original. Indeed, he shows a postmodern delight in asking you to recognise his sources. In The Skull, for instance, the gravedigger's mutinous boy-mate is disappointed to learn he may not after all be working for "a fella up and slaughtered his wife" and later returns from a seemingly mortal battering — pure Playboy Of The Western World. McDonagh constantly plunders the past. But he has a talent for excess, for taking a situation and pushing it to surreal extremes. In The Lonesome West, for example, a dying priest begs the warring brothers to confess their sins; confession, however, only intensifies their hatred, leading to an orgy of destruction.

Is there something heartless about McDonagh's revelations of rural madness? He does lack Chekhovian passion, but he has an endless capacity for surprise. Just when you think he is a ruthlessly sardonic observer, he writes a beautifully tender scene such as that in The Lonesome West between the comically inept Father Welsh — the butt of jokes throughout the trilogy — and a tough, lovestruck teenager. The plays are also bound together by a sense that the characters are all victims: of history, of climate and of rural Ireland's peculiar tension between a suffocating, mythic past and the banalities of the global village where American soaps hold sway.

Garry Hynes's superb production and Francis O'Connor's design highlight the solitude, the endless rain and the ubiquity of religious iconography — an image of Christ is suspended over the action all evening. The cast is also exceptional. Brian F O'Byrne appears, to great effect, in all three plays as a luckless wooer, a blunt-witted cop and a prim collector of religious figurines. But there is equally fine work from Anna Manahan and Marie Mullen as the lacerating mother and daughter in the first play, from Mick Lally as the skull-bashing poteen-swigger of the second, and from David Ganly as the weedy priest in the third.

A remarkable trilogy in which McDonagh punctures Irish myths and views the old country with the ironic detachment of the born outsider.

Last-minute adjustments at the Tate's Mondrian show PHOTO: GARY CALTON

Driven to abstraction

ART
Adrian Searle

YOU ARE an art lover. Close your eyes and think of Mondrian. A square-ish canvas hoves into view, a white canvas with some black lines forming a kind of open, grid-like lattice on it, with some of the spaces between the horizontals and verticals filled in with flat rectangles of yellow, red and blue. Got it? Now think rational thoughts, think about the modern, the aesthetically pure.

Tap out a syncopated beat with your two-tone shoes and boogie-woogie down Broadway. Everything's honking, everything's flaring in primary colours. The lights are red and the taxis are yellow. The city is laid out on a grid, just like Mondrian's paintings.

You have a nightmare of inflatable Edvard Munch Screams, Van Gogh severed-ear novelty ashtrays and Picasso's Guernica commemorative key-rings. In your reverie, you find yourself trying to complete a late Mondrian souvenir jigsaw, but however hard you try the pieces won't fit to form a coherent whole.

We kill the things we love the best. Marketing men do it, educationally-minded explainers do it, curators do it, critics do it, our instant-gratification culture does it. But, at its best, standing in front of a painting makes all this confusion and horror slip away. The experience of yourself, and of this mysterious, complex object, is the thing. In Mondrian's case, the rewards of looking are hard to overstate.

His works remain difficult, subtle, cerebral as much as optically thrilling and joyous. But as much as we might see later Mondrian as being concerned with balance and formal equilibrium, and evincing a kind of calm, they are driven by the artist's urge to disturb. And his works are profoundly antagonistic to the kinds of misuses to which his style has been put. Mondrian, in some respects, is the first deconstructive artist, setting up systems and pictorial organisations that destroy themselves as we look.

The Tate's Mondrian show, until November 30, takes us on a tour from the artist's earliest works — brownish, tenebrous, Hague school landscapes, dimly-lit nocturnes in which ditches, dikes and cows loom in the half-light — through to the spare, light-filled complexities of his later works. Mondrian began with nature and the visible world, slowly abstracted it and then ditched mimesis and the referential altogether.

The bulk of the works in the show — selected by the artist Bridget Riley and the Tate's Sean Rainbird — are on loan from the Haags Gemeentemuseum in the Netherlands, which is temporarily closed for renovation. It is a fascinating exhibition with enough key, crucial paintings to give the show a sense of authority and occasion. But it is not a Mondrian blockbuster, and we should probably be thankful for that. However, the show is marred by being held in the Tate's basement galleries. Lack of daylight and an inadequate lighting system doesn't help to bring the work to life. The hang, especially in the first room, is horrible. Mondrian suffers, and we must suffer for him. But it's worth it.

In her catalogue essay, Bridget Riley talks about Mondrian's failures and successes. "Although Mondrian may sometimes fail," she writes, "he never makes mistakes — everything in his development is of use and contributes to that development." This rhetorical spin is a more generous assessment than Mondrian made of himself. The artist was his own harshest critic when he wasn't talking absolute bilge, the "theosophical nonsense with which the artist's mind was momentarily encumbered", as Yve-Alain Bois delicately put it in his book Painting As Model.

Mondrian spent much of his life looking for a structure for his thought, as much as he was looking for ways to structure his paintings. His development, from small-time landscape painter, via Symbolist, Seurat-inspired Divisionism and a belated Cubism to big-time Mondrianism, was fitful. He proceeded by way of extraordinary flaring apparitions: windmills coruscated by fiery light, Munch-like forests, a [illegible] chrysanthemum like a grotesque mutant brain on a sinewy stem.

HE GOT over it. Symbols went, curves went, recessive space went. Form went. What Mondrian got rid of in his paintings is as important as what he accumulated. The compressed, juddering, broken planes of a 1912 seascape, presaging his move to Cubism, now look prophetic. Mondrian slowly became himself, untethering himself from the world of things, from sensations of objects, atmospheres and moods, in favour of a kind of painting pitched against itself. It is beautiful [illegible] to watch this development, as he first destroys natural appearances, destroys the flattened planes of Cubism, and ultimately destroys the plane itself. The collapse of space and form in his work is, in the end, somewhat terrifying.

Each of Mondrian's moves could — and has — provided the inspiration for innumerable lesser talents. Between the lines, between colour's fullness and ultimate whiteness, we find ourselves caught in the slippage between the real and the symbolic. This is Mondrian's lesson, Mondrian's trap.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Elderly eagle points way to young lions

WOMAD FESTIVAL
Robin Denselow

"*WHAT* we have in there," said the security guard, "is one temperamental artist." It was half past nine at night in a field outside Reading, and the crowds were packed past the Body Piercing kiosk and the Brain Massage machine, waiting to be allowed into a circus tent where the world's best-known Indian musician was supposed to have started his recital. Inside, Ravi Shankar was trying to complete a sound-check before welcoming those lucky enough to squeeze in.

"My beautiful friends," he announced, "it would be more beautiful if you keep total silence. We need a lot of concentration and our music is all improvised and so spiritual." Then he began. Barely visible behind his sitar, he looked like some magnificent, if tetchy, elderly eagle. He started with repeated musical phrases, then gradually built up speed, throwing in flurries of rapid-fire improvisation and bending the notes.

It was easy to see why it was he who first popularised Asian music to rock audiences. It was a gentle, brilliant performance, not just by the master himself but by his daughter Anoushka, who was playing second sitar but was allowed one exquisite solo.

And yet, towards the end the crowds started slipping out. Another, very different legend had arrived on the main outdoor stage. Winston Rodney, better known as Burning Spear, was a key figure in the golden age of Jamaican music in the seventies. Now, with grey beard and dreadlocks stretching down his back, he looked like some reggae academic, but still sounded tremendous. He had a powerful band behind him, with a jazzy three-piece brass section, and mixed classics such as Slavery Day and African Postman with a tribute to Jerry Garcia.

Those two proved hard acts to follow, but the strength of Womad has always been its blend of established artists and the lesser-known, and of traditional music with the experimental. This year the mix was as brave as ever.

The long-term influence of Ravi Shankar could be heard in the work of Nitin Sawhney, part of the new British Asian music scene, whose band mixed traditional themes with jazz, electronics and impressive scat-rap vocal workouts.

Then there were the African bands, ranging from the fine North African-contemporary dance fusion of Natacha Atlas to the rousing, highly political songs of Tarika, from the island of Madagascar.

Best of all were Circus Ethiopia, a troupe made up of street children from Addis Ababa, who have been helped by a Canadian teacher to develop an extraordinary show mixing music with gymnastics, acrobatics and theatre.

All in all, a pretty classic Womad.

Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, and a modicum of irony in Men In Black

Aliens Smith and Jones

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

EVERYTHING'S relative. But after a summer of the kind of $100-million movies that won't tax the brainpower of a pleasantly inebriated stoat, Barry Sonnenfeld's **Men In Black** at least looks as if it's trying, like Tim Burton's Mars Attacks!, to be something different. And given that, at 98 minutes, it must be the shortest epic concept of the year, we should be thankful for small mercies.

The film, based on an obscure Jack Cunningham comic-book series, pursues a good idea to its logical conclusion: that evil, in the shape of very un-ET aliens from outer space, walks among us, and that there's a top-secret US government agency dedicated to combat nasty alien beasties.

Naturally, the agency is incompetent and the aliens scarcely less so, although the film's main trick is to play the drollery with a straight face, so that we can work out the score but nobody else in the film can. The joke is definitely not on us.

Mars Attacks! preferred a swinging critique of the patriotic excesses of Independence Day. Men In Black's less obvious but equally effective approach is to provide an entertainment that's not in the least political but simply announces the innate silliness of our world and probably the whole universe as well.

Sonnenfeld, as Get Shorty showed last year, always casts well. But it was something like a box-office masterstroke to cast Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith as the veteran G-man and his inexperienced sidekick.

Jones is a formidable actor who, since his elevation into the ranks of at least secondary stardom after his Best Supporting Actor Oscar for The Fugitive, has been given parts that he could accomplish standing on his head. Here he plays with the straightest bat he can muster as a man who knows it all and has *carte blanche* to do what he likes as he trains up a brash young black New York cop (Smith) to help him.

This gives the film a solid deadpan centre. The other plus is Rick Baker's array of oddball aliens, seamlessly cut into the live action footage. Men In Black looks a bit of a marvel technically.

There is, I'm afraid, a downside. The worst of which is Sonnenfeld's inability not so much to structure the film satisfactorily but to keep the level of semi-sophistication even. Too often the film's humour falls flat. Sonnenfeld is not yet a very smart director stylistically, and sometimes you feel that this is merely Ghostbusters for a slightly smarter set. The Coen brothers might well have proved a better bet. But would they have produced a film capable of doing more business than anything apart from The Lost World? That is more doubtful.

"*THE ONLY* way that girl is coming back to you is if a blast of semen catapults her across the room and through the window," says Meg Ryan to Matthew Broderick in **Addicted To Love**. It's not the sort of line this perennial girl-next-door generally has to say in her films. Nor, unless my eye has deceived me, has Ryan's belly button been so prominently displayed before.

Addicted To Love is by Griffin Dunne, best known as the actor in Martin Scorsese's After Hours, and the idea was that it would sharpen up Ryan's image a bit. It hasn't. But at least it gives it a shot.

Ryan appears as a woman scorned and out for revenge who breaks into a New York attic to spy on her former lover (Tcheky Karyo) as he catapults his semen noisily into Kelly Preston, who happens to be the childhood sweetheart of Broderick's small-town astrologist. He lives in the attic because it enables him to spy on her. He's not so much bent on revenge as simply hoping against hope that he'll get her back.

Accordingly, he has rigged up a camera obscura — an old-fashioned but effective device that magnifies and projects an image. And with it he can look across the way at his neighbours with impunity. What's more, if he uses a powerful microphone, he can actually hear them at it too.

No, this is not a variant of Hitchcock's Rear Window but a romantic comedy which is designed to show us that true love can sprout in the most surprising circumstances. Slowly but surely, Ryan and Broderick, endlessly bickering at first, begin to fall for each other.

Dunne's film presents this good idea well, explaining that Broderick has come to New York to find his lover and is a bit nonplussed by this big-city girl who breaks in and attempts to take control first of his camera obscura and then himself. Ryan is given some sharper scenes than usual, and Broderick's provincial mean streak is displayed to good effect.

There is also a watchable performance from Karyo as the French restaurateur who is banging, but not exactly loving, his new girl and trying to run his cafe at the same time as coping with her jealousies.

Unfortunately, however, the film soon turns from its nicely black premise into your commonplace romantic farce, and in the end goes nowhere much. Perhaps with these stars it didn't dare to have the courage of its convictions and turn in something thoroughly dark. Whatever happened on the way to the screen, Addicted To Love allows what someone has called "hilarity without guilt". A little more of the latter and a little less of the former would have suited me better.

Shining a light on the official version

Zimbabwean men are up in arms about a new film, writes **Victoria Brittain**

INGRID Sinclair knew she was walking into a political minefield when she made the Zimbabwean film Flame. Not only is she white, a woman and British, her film undermines Zimbabwe's official history books. Flame is about women guerrillas and their disillusioning experiences in the liberation war.

And the controversy has gone right to the top of the Harare hierarchy. Sinclair and her team have been accused of destabilising President Robert Mugabe by challenging accounts of the independence war — which is the basis of his government's legitimacy.

Flame explores the power relationships between men and women in the military. Many of the men are contemptuous of the women's idealistic desire to fight as equals, and are physically and emotionally abusive toward them. In one pivotal scene, a young woman fighter is raped by her glamorous commander, Comrade Danger.

"The film Flame will do enormous injustice to the stature and reputation of the war . . . an insidious attempt to cast the struggle as an aimless adventure," thundered the government newspaper The Herald, which condemned the British Board of Censors for allowing the film to be shown at all.

Flame tells the story of two young girls, Florence and Nyasha, who journey from a village harassed by Rhodesian security forces to the guerrilla camps in Mozambique where they become Flame and Liberty. Flame has a baby she loses in a Rhodesian bombing raid, a loss that pushes her into becoming a famously reckless guerrilla leader. The film shows the sourness of her post-independence marriage and disillusioned return to the village.

Flame may have won 11 awards in festivals from Milan and Amiens to Tunis, but few men in Harare have a good word to say about it. It is not only discussed in government ranks, it is also the subject of everyday conversation, often between men who have not seen it.

Ironically, what support the film has received has come from Europe — backers such as the European Union, Caritas, Danida and Oxfam are said to be pleased with it. Sinclair researched the film — working only with women — for nine years. She first came to Zimbabwe in 1985, five years after the war ended in independence.

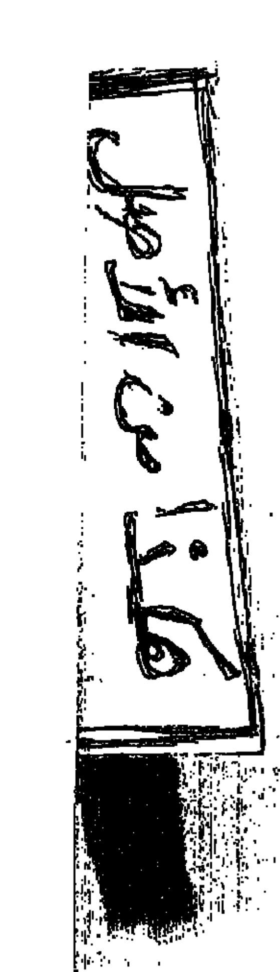
The authorities hounded the film throughout its making. Anyone less dogged than Sinclair would have held up the white hanky long ago. At one point the police were ordered to seize the film as pornographic, though when they actually saw the discreetly filmed rape scene they returned it, admitting there was nothing unseemly. Even more surreal, *agents provocateurs* pretending to be opposition politicians turned up at Sinclair's office and tried to trap her husband, the co-producer Simon Bright, into giving them money. The intelligence service had agents posted outside her house, and the influential War Veterans Association took every opportunity to slate the film in the media.

"They actually denied that rape, or even love and sex, ever took place, though that theory fell apart when a former guerrilla called Freedom wrote a poem about her rape and talked about it in public," Sinclair says. "What they wanted was a glorious epic, not the story I wanted to tell . . ." The pity is that none of the issues the film raises has been sensibly discussed. Perhaps most important is Zimbabwean sexual politics. Men call all the shots, and there is a prudishness about mentioning sex — this partly explains why Harare has become one of the Aids capitals of Africa.

Even in Britain the film seems to have set nerves on edge. Both the BBC and Channel 4 television turned it down flat. It has been suggested that, rather than being uninterested in Zimbabwe, the film has failed to attract interest because it takes black Zimbabwean history seriously.

So, ultimately, what has the film achieved? Is Flame a trivialisation of history, or a path-breaking exposure of women's experience? It is both. But for Zimbabwean women, not only those who fought in the liberation war, the historical shortcomings are more than made up for by the truth Flame herself encapsulates about their lives.

Flame is showing at the Prince Charles Cinema, London, in the week beginning September 12



The call of the dollar

James Wood

Jack London: A Life
by Alex Kershaw
HarperCollins 335pp £20

RE-READING Jack London's stories, after 15 years, is like revisiting the scene of an adolescent embarrassment. These tales of male courage and grapple, at sea and in frozen Alaska, that were so real when one was young, have faded into the impossible.

Pagan, preachy, garrulous and brutal, they offer only calm adventure: the closed adventure of pulp writing, in which action resolves the deepest issues. Even The Call Of The Wild (1903), London's most celebrated novel and one of the best-read of all American literary classics, seems a shallow adventure yarn. It proceeds by throwing revelation after revelation at the reader — but desperately and evasively, like a man on fire casting off his clothes while running for help.

Except in the basest way, London has not lasted as a writer. But from 1900 until his death in 1916, at the age of 40, he was, along with Kipling and Conan Doyle, the most famous writer alive. In Russia, he was idolised. A Mayakovsky poem of 1915, The Cloud In Trousers, goes: "Do you remember/ how you used to talk?/ 'Jack London,/ money,/ love,/ passion'." Alex Kershaw, in this deliberately unliterary but gamesome biography, does not quote Mayakovsky; nor does he need to. Money, love, passion is the troika that powers his book.

Jack London was born without money, and his deprived childhood, like Dickens's, encouraged in him an instinctive socialism, and an instinctive *arrivisme*. Literature would be his way out of poverty. Once he became rich — and Kershaw estimates that in the last seven years of his life his writing earned him $75,000 a year, or $1 million in today's terms — he effortlessly combined a vaguely revolutionary socialism with the most familiar petit bourgeois attitudes.

Everyone who met Jack London felt his largeness of spirit. Kershaw's triumph is to evoke this in a racy narrative that gulps the same air as London's fiction. Sometimes, he blends his sympathies too happily with his subject, and sounds ventriloquistic ("Jack, surely, was a lone wolf — the lonely writer fighting for truth"). And London's books are given the lightest critical dusting. Yet his excessive passion is absolutely alive in Kershaw's account.

It was an astonishing life. Jack London had to leave school at the age of 14 and start work in a canning factory in Oakland, California. He educated himself by stripping bare the local library — Melville, Dante, Milton, Marx, Nietzsche, Darwin. He fled from the factory to the water: by the age of 15 he was an oyster pirate in San Francisco Bay, poaching at night for oysters that he sold during the day. In 1897 and 1898 he and his brother-in-law joined the Klondike gold rush, and suffered a journey to Alaska of excruciating hardship. But this was the experience — man against the elements, and man reduced to a primitive skeleton of his moral code — that would fund his writing life.

His first collection of Klondike stories appeared in 1900. He would produce 40 books in only 16 years,


Wolf man . . . Jack London

while also managing to travel as correspondent to the battlefields of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, and sail throughout the Pacific in 1907 and 1908. Kershaw's brilliant portrait ripples: London was boar-chested, carelessly muscular, sexual, and — perhaps unlike Hemingway — genuinely fearless.

He was violently appetitive — for drink, for food, and for fights. At night he snacked on what he called his "cannibal sandwiches", raw ground beef and onions. He degraded his body with sweeping drinking sessions, and essentially killed himself with alcohol. He liked to be called "Wolf", and fondly named his wife "Mate".

Historically, this was a final spree for the Anglo-Saxon imperial male. President Theodore Roosevelt was, if anything, hardier than London — leading a crack regiment to take Havana while teaching himself Portuguese, and reading Longfellow in the White House. Stephen Crane, a far greater writer than London, was just as bold. London visited Stevenson's grave in Western Samoa; he adored Kipling and Conrad, both of them great adventurers and great writers.

Alas, London was not a great writer. All one needs to do is to read one of the best stories by Crane or Kipling, alongside, say, The Call Of The Wild, and London is revealed as a middlebrow entertainer. His prose is a big soft cloth, wet with cliché and mannerism. He throws meretricious excitements at the reader as, in days gone by, politicians might throw money to voters from their carts: to distract them from the truth. The Call Of The Wild, like all of London's work, has only the most primitive message, a shameful reduction of Nietzsche and Darwin: that "underneath we are as savage and elemental and barbarous as primitive man", and that only the strongest survive.

Kershaw gives the real adventures of London's life a vigorous rub, and thereby avoids having to scrutinise London's literary adventures. Sometimes, this means he neglects the immediate literary context. For instance, he glancingly mentions London's popularity in Russia, but does not mention that not all Russian writers revered London. Some saw through his bluster. A superbly scathing review by the poet Osip Mandelstam, written in 1913, attacked London for his feebleness and ended by praising the Russian translation, which had been attacked for its vulgarity: "Jack London, totally indifferent to questions of literary style, does not deserve another translation." But Jack London does deserve another biography, and Alex Kershaw's compelling book fits its subject marvellously. In its way, it is another translation.

Indian reservations

Ian Jack

The Idea of India
by Sunil Khilnani
Hamish Hamilton 208pp £17.99

FOR ALL its misfortunes, assassinations, corruptions and incompetences, the nation state of India still has a sunny position in the world. If nation states — rather than cultures and landscapes — can be liked, then India is liked. There are a few glitches. It is liked rather less by the small countries that surround it. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal all have their grievances; India is the regional superpower. And global capitalism, meaning big business, is not quite sure if it likes it enough; China, without India's troubling democracy, is for the moment a much safer bet. Still, to be an Indian ambassador must be one of the more pleasant diplomatic duties in the world. We in the West are somehow receptive to the idea of the place, even if we've never set foot in it.

This month is the fiftieth anniversary of its independent statehood, an event that will be celebrated, at least by the media, more in Britain than in India. This paradox alone tells us something about India's popularity. Which other country could it happen to? Poor Pakistan has the same anniversary, though nobody much has noticed.

There are, of course, many apolitical, sometimes half-baked, reasons for this Western fondness, and particularly the British attraction to India. "Imperial nostalgia" usually gets a kicking by Indian writers at this point, followed by a few well-aimed boot-blows at our patronising love of the exotic and "the other" that has been so well described by Edward Said. India offers lots of "otherness", and nicely accessible otherness, too; so many people (unlike in China) speak English, and the pillar boxes are red.

But is that all? In this short and often brilliant book, Sunil Khilnani offers a different and more political answer. The answer is a by-product. It is not Khilnani's intention to explain why non-Indians may care for India. But by describing how India's modern idea of itself came about, he turns the key to its virtues.

The British know one side of the independence story well enough, perhaps too well and too simply. A largely (but by no means completely) peaceful agitation sends the British home; the old Indian Empire is divided in two; Britain and India somehow manage to remain friends (look, there are the servants crying at their masters' farewell). And there the story usually ends. The other side of the story, which has become the most important side, is what India did with itself as — setting aside the very different examples of North and South America — the first great ex-colonial state. Its boundaries, administration and politics, even its historical knowledge of itself, had all been shaped by its encounter with Britain. Now it was free, which meant in practice that its future was in the hands of its nationalist élite and chiefly of that élite's most prominent member, the first Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

The character of the new state had no inevitability. Khilnani points out that no models existed for a democratic state that included from its very beginning so many differences and tensions — of and between castes, races, languages and religions. The history of European nationalism suggested that language and geography were the things that gave a state its deepest sense of itself, but neither of those unifying simplicities were available. A powerful faction in Indian nationalism — the faction that, at its extreme end, killed Gandhi — wanted to place Hinduism at the centre of the state. It was, after all, the majority religion and the oldest, and its mythology offered nationalism the key element of a glorious, if fanciful past.

NEHRU'S alternative to this was altogether more fluid and "inclusive". He gave India a layered identity, which allowed loyalty to different ways of belonging but defined citizenship by "civic and universalist criteria". India would be modernised and the failings of its history critically examined, but none of its many pasts were to be chucked away or reviled, not even its British past. Religion was kept out of politics to a surprisingly successful extent, given what was happening next door in the two wings of Pakistan.

As Khilnani writes: "Half a century later, it is easy to miss the sheer novelty of what was attempted in the two decades after independence. Today, the idea of multiculturalism is a familiar if vague one . . . yet in the late forties, it was certainly not a standard way to envisage the construction of a new state."

The result was a nationalism that has never been easy to define. It contains flaws and a lot of slipperiness that allowed some questions never to be resolved (sometimes to the good — for example: English is one of India's many "official" languages, but is it or Hindi the "national" one? And does it matter?) But, in harness with the state's ability to bend under the pressure of the popular vote, it has sustained the unity of India so far. How much further is impossible to say. Nehru's Congress party, the one truly national party, ran out of steam long ago and the parties that have replaced it tend to have much more certain and divisive ideas of what being Indian means — what India owes them. Add this political fact to the social turmoil that may result from economic liberalisation and the aspirations of a consumer society; then throw away your crystal ball.

Khilnani's book is an eloquent, persuasive argument for Nehru's improvised, permeable sense of nationhood. If India loses this identity, it will be a much less attractive place to the outsider and, more importantly, to many of the people who live in it. Khilnani is dispassionate, scholarly, never sentimental. There is a crisp wit to his sentences and he is frank about his country's failings.

Many books about India will be published this year; I doubt if any will be wiser and more illuminating about its modern condition than this.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

One-Way Street, by Walter Benjamin, intro Susan Sontag (Verso Classics, £12)

THIS is a superb introduction to the man, mixing travel pieces, aphorisms and criticism — including a terrific essay on Karl Kraus ("Only Baudelaire hated as Kraus did the satiety of healthy common sense, and the compromise that intellectuals made with it in order to find shelter in journalism"). The essay "Hashish in Marseilles" contains the best description of the stoned state of mind that I have read.

Does God Play Dice? The New Mathematics of Chaos, by Ian Stewart (Penguin, £8.99)

A NEW edition of the book first published in 1989, which introduced us to Chaos Theory (it is not a theory, Stewart pointedly reminds us: it is a concept). I had another look to see if I could understand any more of it this time round. Well, not really, but as Stewart writes the comprehensible bits in such a snappy and engaging manner, it does not matter an awful lot.

Now All We Need Is a Title: Famous Book Titles and How They Got That Way, by André Bernard (Norton, £6.95)

TERRIBLY depressing when an otherwise wonderful publisher decides to make some cash by change by producing a sloppy and lazy book. This slim volume tells you all the stories about book titles that you know already. Did you know, for instance, that Brave New World got its title from a line in Shakespeare's The Tempest? We make love to my old boots, as we say on the books pages.

The Archers: The Official Inside Story, by Vanessa Whitburn (Virgin, £9.99)

THE surprising thing is that Whitburn, who has made the BBC Radio 4 programme The Archers so exciting and generally wonderful that I sometimes ask myself if, apart from the necessity of feeding and clothing my family, I have any other reason for living, writes the behind-the-scenes story of this incredible cultural monument in a rather dopey style. The book also contains pictures of the cast, always disturbing when they work in radio (Sid Perks does not look like that, I'm sorry). So what. You'll buy it anyway, and why not?

Granta 58: Ambition (£7.99)

THE title fits the contents like a push. Ian Parker writes about "Brandon Lee", the bloke who pretended to be a schoolboy so he could go to medical school; Doris Lessing actually manages to say something readable this time; and there's a piece by Paul Auster on His Struggle, and it's always worth reading him.

400,000,000 years of life on earth . . . Ammonites from Lower Lias, Somerset PHOTO: NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Wringing life from a rock

Tim Radford

Life: An Unauthorised Biography
by Richard Fortey
HarperCollins 399pp £20

IN 1895, H G Wells left his time traveller "wandering on some plesiosaurus-haunted Oolitic reef, or beside the lonely saline lakes of the Triassic Age". But Wells knew you did not need the Time Machine to explore the past. The reefs are still plesiosaur-haunted. That is why we know about plesiosaurs. They have been turned to stone, as if by some Medusa.

The Medusa was turned to stone, too: the Ediacara Hills of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia contain Pre-cambrian rocks called pound quartzite, which look as though they have been splashed by fossilised jellyfish-like animals with radial spokes and ridges. Jellyfish are pretty low on the rungs of life's ladder. Richard Fortey lists the simplicity: no blood, very little nervous tissue and a body wall of two layers of cells separated by jelly. The inner layer lines a stomach cavity. The mouth is just a hole surrounded by feathery tentacles.

These creatures have almost no substance, so it is miraculous that they should be preserved in the oldest life-bearing rocks. But they have staying power all the same. They are still around. Fortey saw some, pulsating on the surface of Arctic seas on a voyage to Spitsbergen as a student on a field trip. "I could have been looking back through 700 million years," he says.

But he was. The planet is its own time machine, its own history book, its own clock and calendar, its own fast track to the past. Pick up a stone and you have a piece of star that fell to Earth: look at it hard enough, and it might tell you where it has been all this time. The garden clay was once feldspar in a granite mountain. The sandstone wall was once a Jurassic beach. There are indeed sermons in stone and books in the running brooks. Right now, Nasa's stereoscopic camera and little robot probe on the Ares Vallis on Mars are investigating a watery past on a distant neighbour: here endeth a lesson in rocks tumbled and beached by torrents that evaporated billions of years ago, under the indifferent stare of twin moons and a cool sun.

The rocks of Britain — Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, for example — in the last century became milestones on a journey towards the discovery of deep time. Once, Martin Luther and Archbishop Ussher differed about whether God made the world in 4000 BC or 4004 BC. But long before Darwin, the biblical chronologies were being abandoned: the rocks told a story of life and landscape in the making, over unimaginable spans of time. In a walk across west Britain you tread 140 million years from the Cambrian limestone of Wales to the Devonian corals and desert sandstone, and this walk is but a few steps: Fortey's book is subtitled "A natural history of the first 4,000,000,000 years of life on Earth."

FORTEY IS a paleontologist at the Natural History Museum in London. Palaeontologists are specialists: Fortey's forte is the trilobite, that odd , vanished creature from the Cambrian. His chapter on it is headed "My animal and other families" which, together with a knockout title, should tell you something about his approach to life's mystery.

And mystery it is: life is preserved in the rocks, but life has also overwritten the Earth's story. The first creatures on the planet were probably autotrophs, bacteria dwelling in volcanic hells, eating rock and farting poisonous gases into an atmosphere already composed of carbon dioxide, ammonia, methane and hydrogen cyanide. Some little creatures exploited the energy of boiling water and dined on phosphorus. Others synthesised the fire from the sun and ate carbon dioxide from the air. The first left us sheets of phosphate rock and the second became rocks — they are called stromatolites — but they began the slow business of filling the air with oxygen.

Once enough oxygen formed, an ozone layer could shield the planet from lethal radiation, and a different kind of life could begin: plants could creep on to the land, and be eaten by animals, in a cycle that took carbon dioxide from the air and turned it into fibres, which were then eaten to make bones which were to leave their writing in the carbonate rocks.

The book is about lives as well as life: the eccentrics and the obsessives who began to piece the tale together, and about places too, where the evidence is writ large, or enigmatically. Some lessons keep returning. Small is not beautiful but dutiful. Life's burden rests on the bacteria that fix nitrogen from the air and the tiny arthropods and fungi that dismantle the dead and return life to nutritious dust for the next round.

The springtail mites of the Devonian are still with us, along with the liverworts, mosses, clubmosses and ferns that survive from the planet's first great greening. The meek may, after all, inherit the Earth, says Fortey. "But they must remain meek — through hundreds of millions of years. It is as if lack of ambition somehow secured longevity. Live and let liverwort! These organisms are reminiscent of the Good Soldier Schweik, the soldier who survived by dint of always being somewhere away from the front line." This is not showing off: this is showing what you can wring from a rock. The world is a book you have to learn to read and the pages are often torn or missing.

Like the Bible, new translations become necessary every so often. The first chapters are missing and bits of the story seem arbitrary. Flippers and fins became legs and arms and claws and wings, but why always four limbs for vertebrates? Was five toes rather than one, or seven, the result of fickle selection? The story — and the questions — proceed headlong, from the barren Archaean rocks to the planting of emmer wheat and barley in ancient Jericho, at the end of the Ice Age, when pre-history turns into history.

This is not a book for people who like science books. It is a book for people who love books, and life. Fortey says his story should provoke awe, not trite moral lessons. He quotes Goethe: "I am here to wonder." He has written a wonderful book.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16, contact CultureShop

Love through the ears

Natasha Walter

Grace Notes
by Bernard MacLaverty
Jonathan Cape 277pp £14.99

BERNARD MACLAVERTY'S three novels, Lamb, Cal, and now Grace Notes, form a triptych about love. But only in Grace Notes has MacLaverty at last found the optimism to write a love story that ends in happiness.

But although it's his most optimistic novel, Grace Notes is a less satisfying book than his earlier two works. It's a loosely formed tale that lacks their concentrated power. For the first time he uses a female protagonist. Catherine is an unmarried mother and composer whose father has just died, who works her way out of her misery by composing a glorious piece of music and coming to terms with having a child.

MacLaverty spoke through his male protagonists with absolute conviction and a kind of naive directness; they lived and breathed on every line. But with Catherine you feel his imagination straining over how it might feel for this woman to, say, give birth or to write music. What he comes up with is pretty impressive, but it doesn't quite have the winged confidence that we've come to expect of MacLaverty.

MacLaverty's use of grand themes — thwarted passion, death, artistic creation — gives his work a 19th century aura. He is one of the few contemporary writers of any quality to be unafraid of tackling scenes of intense sentiment head-on. This novel opens with Catherine crying as she catches a plane to go to her father's funeral, and it ends with her crying as she listens to the first performance of her masterpiece. But there's nothing whipped up about the emotional drama of MacLaverty's work. On the contrary, you feel that he is always holding something back, that the emotions would sweep him away if he didn't hold on to the engraved precision of his language.

This linguistic precision is as marvellous in Grace Notes as it is in his other novels, and here it has a particular slant. Because Catherine is a composer, her world is lived most vividly through her ears. When the undertakers pass through the mourners to take her father's coffin, she notes, "the hiss of their overcoats as they squeezed past the kneeling figures — the creak of the floorboards". These details ring true; they render the light and shade of a composer's mind. But the depiction of Catherine's work is less successful. The performance of her masterpiece at the end of the novel has to bear an immense weight of symbolism. It's not just the culmination of a personal journey, it's also heavy with political freight since Catherine, a Catholic, is using Orangemen as drummers on their traditional drums.

And in the end MacLaverty's prose begins to veer off into rhetoric. So he tells us that the music conveys: "Catherine Anne's vision. A joy that celebrates being human. A joy that celebrates its own reflection, its own ability to make joy. To reproduce." He has never needed to spell out his denouements before, and it sounds a little hollow. You can't help having the sneaking suspicion that although MacLaverty would like to believe in the optimism of his story, he can't quite do it; and so neither can we.

A banana drama

Veronica Horwell

Amrita
by Banana Yoshimoto
Faber 367pp £9.99

I'M SORRY, I love this novel for all the wrong reasons. Not for its language: Yoshimoto thanks the translator Russell F Wasden in a formal notette — she should revile him, no young Japanese I've ever heard could be rendered with his US remix of New Age waftiness and trailerpark whinge. And you wouldn't want to know about the plot. What plot? None much beyond Sakumi, late twentyish, ditzyish, the narrator, regaining her memory after braining herself in a fall down iced stone steps.

Events? Nights in Sakumi's mother's family kitchen; a holiday on the tropical isle of Saipan where the vile sea-cucumbers fouling the beach are supposed to be the souls of Japanese troops who died during the war. Oh, and Sakumi's best friend is stabbed, and a UFO streaks over, as predicted by Sakumi's baby brother Yoshio, who like most of the rest of the cast — the albino beach bum and his singer wife, Sakumi's boyfriend (whom she inherited from her suicide movie star sister) — is clairvoyant, into ghosts, powers, sightings.

None of it is remotely important. What matters is that Yoshimoto writes, unselfconsciously, about the new Japan: divorced, in wobbly families, unwilling to dedicate itself to lifelong unremitting careers, no longer confined to its national boundaries by xenophobia or worries about foreign standards of bath cleanliness.

These characters world-travel on a whim, and a strong yen. And it is the ephemera: TV tales of the supernatural, the cans of Royal Milk Tea and those awful cheap cabbage omelettes called *economiyaki*, which have been giving me such pleasure.

They take me back to Japan instantly, the Japan of now, that landscape of the heart which can't quite be evoked by reading the greats like Kawabata or Endo. Which would be like trying to call up contemporary Britain by reading Evelyn Waugh.

I've been shamelessly wallowing in Yoshimoto out of nostalgia (which is her favourite and much-mentioned emotion) in the primary definition of the word: an ache for loved places. She really does have the Japanese genius for having and lightly holding the moment: winter afternoon in a French bakery in Tokyo, the baguettes resting briefly to mitigate the acridity of the yeast smell; the day brother Yoshio leaves for California and the strong summer wind sweeps the trees. French bakeries in Japan, by the way, make wonderful madeleines. You dip them in green tea.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Common access to diversity

Mark Cocker



ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

BEESTON REGIS Common feels at times like a wildlife site under siege. Although a hedge hides the adjacent road, it cannot cut out the incessant sound of holiday traffic. Nor does it block out a view of the rooftops belonging to the coastal towns and villages that surround the common on three sides. Unlike most important habitats in Norfolk, the common is not actively managed by any official conservation body. Nor does one own or seek to own it. In fact, nobody owns Beeston Common, which explains, ironically, its survival and importance as a place for nature.

As the word "common" suggests, originally it was everyman's land — a shared status so old nobody quite knows when the communal usage first began. But like most medieval commons, its resources — wild berries, firewood, sedge, reed and, above all, grazing rights for livestock — were at the disposal of the local community.

This traditional pattern of management continued unbroken for centuries, and the fact that the site was waterlogged by a number of freshwater springs, coupled with its confused legal title, meant that no individual sought to possess or improve it by drainage, ploughing or the application of fertilisers and chemicals.

The result is one of the most important and diverse flower meadows in the region. To go there in midsummer is to encounter a place of extraordinary beauty, bursting with colour and life.

The precise relationship between the soils and water levels means that different areas hold different suites of species. At the southern end is a chest-high wilderness of hemp agrimony, willowherb, fleabane, red bartsia, yellow rattle, hogweed and yarrow. Further along the trail there is a richer, more enticing micro-habitat, where raised mounds of sphagnum moss soak up water like sponges and provide conditions perfect for a number of damp-loving plants. Most spectacular are the orchids. One rare species, marsh helleborine, can be harvested by the armful. Others, like the deliciously scented fragrant orchid, have dense-flowered spikes, some of them half a metre tall.

Closer to the moss surface is another oddity — a species party to a strange vegetable drama. Sundews, no more than 3-4cm high, are carnivorous plants arrayed with minute spikes, each glistening with a droplet of sticky dew that traps unsuspecting insects. Once their victims are thoroughly ensnared in the tempting juices, the miniature triffids dissolve and digest them.

When I visited Beeston I could not help being captivated not just by these details, but by the common's sheer diversity. Just 25 hectares have so far produced 400 plants species, 300 moths, 26 butterflies and 10 dragonflies.

It strikes me that flower meadows like these are rich not just in some numerical and scientific sense (although even by these criteria they represent the rainforests of a temperate landscape such as Britain). Just as important, they are an imaginative resource — a point of access into our history, especially the relationship between our predecessors and their physical world. These banks of flowers surrounded by moths and butterflies speak as clearly of our past as any pagan ruins or gothic cathedral. Yet in the past 60 years we have lost 97 per cent of our flower-rich meadows.

These statistics come to mind whenever I listen to the current debate in Britain over a proposal to ban fox hunting. In defence of this rural tradition, landowners, farmers and country people claim that they are the guardians of our countryside's physical and spiritual riches. It seems pertinent, therefore, to ask what happened to Britain's flower meadows?

Chess Leonard Barden

MIGUEL NAJDORF, who has died aged 87, was one of the characters of world chess as well as being an imaginative, attacking player who won more than 50 tournaments. At Olympiads and World Championships, Najdorf was always in the thick of post-mortems and speed chess, full of voluble ideas and with a boisterous energy that continued into his eighties. His name lives on in the Najdorf Sicilian, but his success stemmed from natural talent rather than study. He won individual games against five world champions, yet it was his fluent, instinctive middle games which impressed most.

This game is a shortened version of Najdorf's thoughts during a 1962 Olympiad brilliancy, which he explained to me at the time for Chess Monthly.

M Najdorf v L Portisch

When I play against a fellow Grand Master, I study few variations, relying on the intuitive correctness of my chess ideas. I've learnt that a game is never lost without a definite mistake, so when Portisch took only five minutes on the clock for his first 15 moves and I was a pawn down, I was at first downcast, but then reasoned that a new move in such a tested variation must have a weakness.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 c5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e3 cxd4 7 exd4 Bb4?! Why should this idea, played instantaneously, be bad? He has voluntarily made the cxd4 exchange, opening up White's c1 bishop, in the hope of 8 Bd2 0-0 9 Bd3 Nc6 10 0-0 Be7! when Black's later Ndb4 is stronger because White's bishop is passive at d2. So I prefer a natural attacking move.

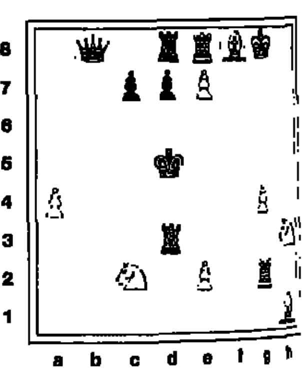
8 Qc2 Nc6 9 Bd3 Nxc3 10 bxc3 Nxd4 11 Nxd4 Qxd4 I hadn't foreseen this at all, and at first thought I was lost; then I realised that Black's development is backward, so I have a strong attack for the lost pawn.

12 Bb5+! Ke7 Bd7? fails to 13 Bxd7+ Kxd7 14 Qa4+. **13 0-0!** If 13 cxb4? Black would not capture at a1 but reply Qxb4+ and Qxb5. **Qxc3 14 Qe2!** 14 Qe4 is weaker because Bd6 threatens Qe5 and a queen exchange. **Bd6 15 Bb2 Qa5** I was already quite sure that White is winning; he has a big development advantage for two pawns.

16 Rfd1 Threatening 17 Rxd6! Kxd6 18 Qe5+ Ke7 19 Qc5+ and wins. **Rd8 17 Qh5!** It's time to bring the queen, the strongest piece on the board, into a powerful position. At first sight, this is a self-pin of White's b5 bishop. However, it is Black's queen which is in danger. If Bd7 18 Qg5+! or h6 18 Bxg7 when Black's position collapses.

f6 18 Qxh7! Kf7 If Qxb5 19 Qxg7+ Ke8 20 Bxf6 with the threat 21 Rxd6! **19 Be2!** I want to give mate! **Qg5 20 Bc1!** White is after the queen as well as the king: if Qg6 21 Bh5. **Bxh2+ 21 Kxh2 Qe5+ 22 f4 Resigns** If Qxe2 23 Rxd8 and Black will soon be mated.

No 2484



White mates in two moves against any defence (by TR Rowland, Dublin 1887). A visually striking problem with several plausible near-misses.

No 2483: 1 Rb1. If Kf8 2 Rb7 Kg8 3 Kf6 Kh8 4 Kg6 Kg8 5 Rh8 mate. If Kd8 2 d4 Kc7 3 Kc7 Kc6 4 Kd8 Kc5 5 Rb6 mate.

Quick crossword no. 378

Across

1 Surprised — captured (6)
4 Hate (5)
7 Rate (6)
8 Material (6)
9 Adhesive (4)
10 Aped (8)
12 Eminence (11)
17 Disheartened (8)
19 Saucy (4)
20 See 5
21 Thought (6)
22 Be of use — work for (5)
23 Official enumeration of inhabitants (6)

Down

1 Made chess move with king and rook (7)
2 Futile (7)
3 Enmity (9)
4 Look for (5)
5,20 British admiral (1758-1805) (7,6)
6 Ebb (6)
11 Frequency of occurrence (9)
13 Surrounded by water (7)
14 Momentum (7)
15 Timid — apprehensive (7)
16 A beautiful youth (6)
18 Unaccompanied (5)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

MANY readers have written to express interest in the bridge computer program GIB — Goren In A Box — about which I wrote recently. I'm sorry that I don't have time to reply to all letters individually. But for those who want to know more about GIB and who have access to the World Wide Web via the Internet, I would recommend that you start at *www.bridgeplaza.com*.

This is the address of the Bridge Plaza, brainchild of Fred Gitelman, an Olympic silver medallist for Canada and a computer genius who has written some wonderful bridge software. Bridge Plaza has a section devoted to GIB, which has joined the American Contract Bridge League and become the first computer program to win Master Points.

Bridge Plaza enables you to watch the action in recent tournaments as if you were a spectator in the Vugraph theatre. You are shown the hand, then the auction appears a bid at a time, and the play of the cards is shown trick by trick.

Another section of the Plaza is a treasury of bridge deals, ranging from international tournaments to club duplicates. You can follow each hand bid by bid and card by card, deciding what moves you would make before revealing what the experts did. This hand *(left)*, from the Bridge Plaza's collection is a salutary lesson to those who moan about unlucky distributions — declarer, as you will see, could not have made his contract unless the trumps broke 6-0! The manner in which the contract was reached was almost as bizarre as the manner in which it was made — North-South game, dealer West *(see table)*.

	North	
	♠ J 9	
	♥ 10 9 5	
	♦ Q J 9 7 6 5 3	
	♣ 2	
West		**East**
♠ None		♠ Q 8 7 6 5 3
♥ K J 7 6 2		♥ Q 3
♦ A K 10 4 2		♦ 8
♣ Q 8 3		♣ 10 9 7 6
	South	
	♠ A K 10 4 2	
	♥ A 8 4	
	♦ None	
	♣ A K J 5 4	

South	West	North	East
	1♥	Pass	1♠
2♣	2♦	Pass	2♥
2♠[1]	Pass	3♦[2]	Pass
3♥[3]	Pass	4♦[4]	Pass
4♠[5]	Pass	Pass[6]	Dble
Pass	Pass	Pass[7]	

1 I wonder if my partner will think this is natural?
2 I've no idea what he's doing, but I know which suit I've got.
3 Perhaps he'll interpret this as a black two-suiter.
4 See 2, only more so.
5 This surely must be natural!
6 I've still no idea what he's doing, but I know whose funeral this is.
7 See 6, only more so.

West led the ace of diamonds, ruffed by South. Declarer cashed the ace and king of clubs, discarding a heart from dummy, then ruffed a club. The fall of West's queen was welcome, and South pressed his advantage. Returning to hand with the ace of hearts, he cashed the jack of clubs, which West could not ruff.

Dummy's last heart was discarded, and declarer continued by ruffing a heart with the jack of trumps. That came to seven tricks, and since he still had the AK10 of spades over East's queen, he could not be denied three more winners and his contract. If West had possessed a single one of East's spades, he could have led it at the first trick — thereby depriving declarer of a vital ruff in dummy. "Lucky the trumps broke, partner," observed South.

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Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Rao ruins Derby day

RAJESH RAO set a Sussex individual scoring record for the NatWest Trophy with a match-winning 158 against Derbyshire in the quarter-finals at Derby last week. Rao, drafted into the side at the last minute because Neil Lenham was unable to play through injury, took 165 balls and hit 16 boundaries to overhaul Gehan Mendis's 141 not out against Warwickshire 17 years ago.

Earlier, Chris Adams scored 129 as Derbyshire amassed 327 for eight, a target no side batting second in the competition had previously surpassed, but which Sussex managed to beat with four balls to spare.

In next week's semi-finals, Sussex will meet Warwickshire, who marched into their seventh semi in nine years with a 28-run victory over Middlesex at Lord's. Warwickshire made 286 for six in their 60 overs, with man-of-the-match David Hemp contributing 112. Mark Ramprakash, the Middlesex captain, contributed 98 to a losing cause.

England vice-captain Nasser Hussain scored an unbeaten 89 to steer Essex to a three-wicket win over Nottinghamshire (288 for five) at Trent Bridge. Hussain made amends for three dropped chances, twice spilling Paul Johnson, who went on to make 106.

Essex will meet Glamorgan, who beat Yorkshire at Cardiff, in the other semi-final. Waqar Younis, the world's fastest bowler, was the toast of Glamorgan, thanks to his heroics with the bat as his side recorded a nerve-jangling one-wicket win over the visitors.

There seemed no hope for the Welsh county after they slumped from 140-2 to 209-9, chasing Yorkshire's 236-8. Last man Dean Cosker hung on, keeping out 10 balls to make three runs while Younis swung the bat superbly at the other end, finishing 34 not out as Glamorgan triumphed with an over to spare.



Ben Hollioake . . . Test call-up

BEN HOLLIOAKE looks set to become the youngest England Test player for nearly 50 years after being included in a 13-strong squad for this week's crucial fifth Test at Trent Bridge. The 19-year-old Surrey all-rounder was named by England selectors alongside his elder brother, Adam. Derbyshire paceman Devon Malcolm and Phil Tufnell, the Middlesex spinner, are also back in favour. Mark Butcher, Mark Ealham and Mike Smith have been dropped. The full squad is: Atherton, Stewart, Crawley, Hussain, Thorpe, Hollioake A, Hollioake B, Croft, Caddick, Gough, Headley, Malcom, Tufnell.

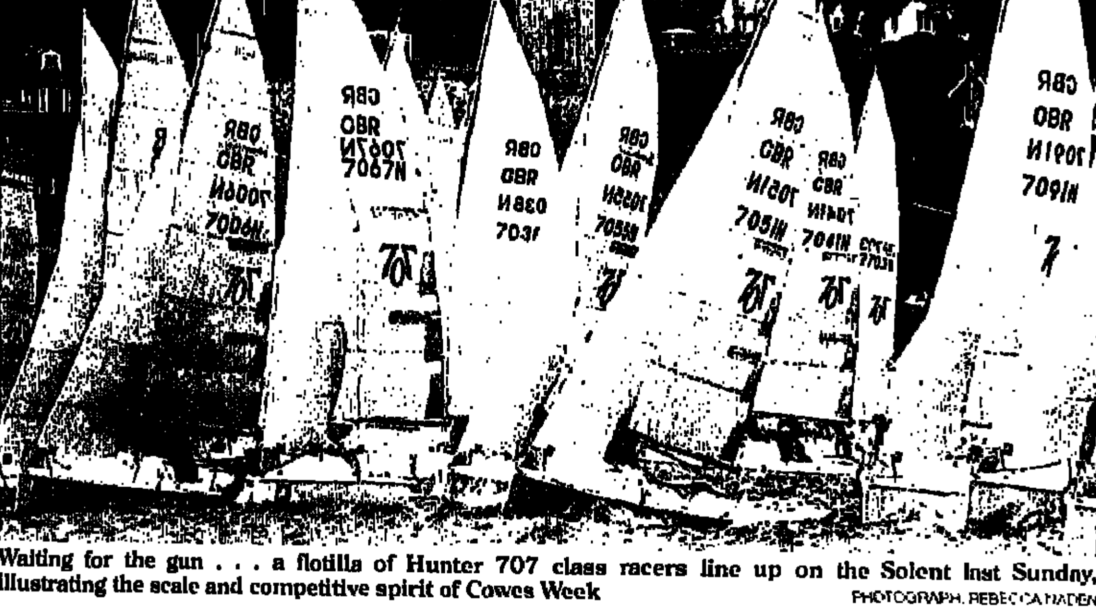
JOAKIM HAEGGMAN put recent disappointments behind him to record an impressive victory in the Volvo Scandinavian Masters at Malmö last Sunday. The 27-year-old, dogged by injuries and poor form since his success in the Malaysian Open three years ago, became the second Swede to win a European Tour event in his own country when he shot 69 for an 18-under-par total of 270. Jesper Parvenik won at Malmö two years ago.

AUSTRALIAN rider Michael Doohan is expected to secure his fourth 500cc world title at the British Grand Prix at Donington Park next week after a seventh consecutive win this season in last Sunday's Brazilian round at Rio de Janeiro — his ninth victory in 10 races. Doohan got off to slow start, but once in his stride, he was unstoppable. Tadayuki Okada of Japan had to settle for second place and Luca Cadalora of Italy came third.

SPORTS Minister Tony Banks outlined plans to ensure a fair deal for both football supporters and the game as a whole. Former Tory minister David Mellor will head the Government's 15-strong Football Task Force, which will include representatives of the Football Association, the Premier League, the Football League and the Professional Footballers Association, the Commission for Racial Equality and fans' organisations. The task force has been asked to investigate and recommend new measures to deal with the public's concerns. Racism, ticket prices, access for the disabled and increasing commercialisation of the game will all be scrutinised.

ALL'S well that ends well for British boxer Henry Akinwande, disqualified for persistently holding Lennox Lewis during their recent WBC heavyweight title farce in Lake Tahoe. The Nevada State Boxing Commission agreed to pay him the $1 million purse they withheld after the fight. "We decided not to fine Akinwande because we believe he lost enough when he lost his chance at winning the title," said a commission spokesman.

THE International Amateur Athletic Federation decided at its congress in Athens last week to halve drug suspensions to two years because many countries, including Germany and Russia, are unable to uphold a four-year ban under civil law. The decision was attacked by Linford Christie, who called on Britain to defy it. "I don't understand why, instead of going forward and increasing the ban, the sport has taken the backward step in reducing it," he said. "Someone has to take a lead and that has to be us in Britain. We should keep the four-year ban."



Waiting for the gun . . . a flotilla of Hunter 707 class racers line up on the Solent last Sunday, illustrating the scale and competitive spirit of Cowes Week PHOTOGRAPH: REBECCA NADEN

Britain spring a surprise in Admiral's Cup

Bob Fisher

COWES Week spluttered into a delayed start last Sunday as Admiral's Cup competitors rested after their 187-mile Channel Race. Saturday's racing was abandoned because of insufficient wind and four of the smaller boat classes were abandoned for a second day.

The United States took over as Admiral's Cup leaders following solid performances offshore, and Britain climbed into second place as Germany, the leaders after two races, failed in the long race.

The British team continue to amaze their critics. John Kolius with MK Cafe won the ILC-40 class, while Ken Read with Flash Gordon 3 and Chris Larson in Jameson were respectively second in the Big Boat and Mumm 36 classes.

Third place by Tony Buckingham's Easy Oars and Tim Barrett's Bradamante, added to the fourth position of Graham Walker's Corum/Indulgence, put Britain 6½ points ahead of Germany and 11¼ behind the leaders.

Kit Hobday and Tim Louis's Independent Bear regained winning form in CHS Class 1, beating Jon Wardill's Australian Maid by 14 minutes, and Stephen James' Jacobite had a two-minute win over Chris Jago's Flamboyant, a fellow Swan 40, in CHS Class 2.

Football FA Charity Shield: Chelsea 1 Manchester Utd 1 (Utd win 4-2 on penalties)

Champions are on target in shoot-out

David Lacey at Wembley

THE FA Charity Shield stayed at Old Trafford last Sunday without Manchester United dropping any obvious hints that the Premiership title will eventually end up in the same familiar surroundings for the fifth time in six years. That, after all, would be giving the game away.

Instead Alex Ferguson's long-reigning champions began the new season by beating the FA Cup holders in a manner that nobody will want to see repeated when the World Cup reaches its climax in Paris next July.

After another of those mildly interesting legstretchers, which the Shield so often provides, had ended 1-1 at full-time, United won a penalty shoot-out 4-2, courtesy of a save by Peter Schmeichel and a shot over the bar from Roberto Di Matteo.

The goals in open play arrived within four minutes of one another early in the second half, when Mark Hughes headed Chelsea into the lead only for Ronny Johnsen to respond in similar fashion for United. Their principal effect was to rouse the game from its summer torpor and add a competitive edge that up to that point had been seen only in the odd flying boot or elbow.

At least Chelsea provided a more durable shield in the Shield than Newcastle United's flabby defending had done a year earlier, when Manchester United won 4-0.

Hughes's goal, nodded in at the far post after Zola had worked a short corner with Wise before producing a centre which Schmeichel could do little about, persuaded United to raise the tempo of their game but, once Johnsen had brought the scores level from Giggs's corner, the football relaxed once more.

Eventually Ferguson, having left David Beckham on the bench, brought him on with Jordi Cruyff, taking off Sheringham and Giggs. Beckham looked sharper than much of what had gone before even if his shirt did bear the name "Beckam". You would have thought that someone going out with Posh Spice would have learned not to have dropped his aitches.